

VICTORIAN SENSATIONS

By the same Author

THE MAYFAIR CALENDAR
FAMOUS TRIALS RE-TOLD
BLOTTED 'SCUTCHEONS
CRIME ON THE CONTINENT
JUDICIAL DRAMAS
FEMININE FRAILTY
ROMANCES OF THE PEERAGE

Etc.



SIR WILLIAM AND LADY WILDE

Prominent in a Dublin *cause célèbre*.

(From a sketch by Harry Furniss. Reproduced by permission of Mrs. Furniss.)

VICTORIAN SENSATIONS

BY
HORACE WYNDHAM

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COLONEL VALENTINE BAKER

Colonel Valentine Baker

EXTRACT FROM THE *LONDON GAZETTE*:

“Lieut.-Colonel and Brevet-Colonel Valentine Baker, half-pay, late 10th Hussars, has been removed from the Army, her Majesty having no further occasion for his services.

“Dated 2nd August, 1875.”

I

VALENTINE BAKER, the third son of a West India merchant who had settled in Gloucestershire, was born in 1827. Destined for a career as a tea-planter, on leaving school he accompanied his elder brother (afterwards Sir Samuel Baker, the African explorer) to Ceylon. This brother, who had somewhat patriarchal ideas, proposed to establish an “English settlement” at Newera Eliya. Accordingly, he took out with him, in addition to his brother, twelve emigrants and their families from Gloucester, together with a stock of poultry, pigs, and cattle, and carriages and horses; and, to give a finishing touch to his entourage, also a huntsman and a pack of hounds.

It was during the intervals of tea-planting that Valentine Baker had his first experience of military service. This was in 1848, when he was appointed to an ensigncy in the Ceylon Rifles. He was full of ambition; and the humdrum round of a purely local corps offering no scope for its development, he pulled the proper strings and effected an exchange into the Tenth Dragoons. But he did not stop with them long, and in the same year (1852) he was transferred to the Twelfth Lancers. Luck was with him, as almost at once his new regiment proceeded to South Africa, to take part in the Kaffir War. The campaign, with Sir Harry Smith, a veteran of Waterloo and Aliwal, in command, was not a very creditable one. Still, the young soldier received his baptism of fire (or, rather, of assegais) and,

by his courage and resourcefulness, attracted the good opinion of his superiors. "Cornet Baker," wrote his chief, "conducted himself most gallantly."

It was not long before Valentine Baker had a second chance of exhibiting his soldierly qualities. From South Africa he sailed to India, and from India to the Crimea. In the action of Tchernaya, in which the Russians were led by Prince Gortschakoff, he was wounded. This experience was followed by the storming of the Malakoff and the siege of Sebastopol, and a spell of service on the staff of Lord Raglan, an officer who was generally considered a little past his prime. The opinion was not unmerited, for he had not heard a shot fired since the Battle of Waterloo, and found some difficulty in appreciating that the military clock had advanced. Thus, he still had a confusing habit of referring to the French as "the enemy," and would express much uneasiness at the proximity to his camp of Marshal Canrobert.

Sir Gerald Graham, a young subaltern of the Royal Engineers who was in camp with Valentine Baker, had no diffidence about criticising his superior. But, then, "nothing (and nobody) is sacred to a Sapper."

"Lord Raglan," he wrote (in a letter that, fortunately for himself, slipped past the censor), "is neither a great tactician nor a good general. . . . Until we have a more vigorous and resolute one, I am afraid we shall not take Sebastopol."

The War-Office authorities appear to have shared this opinion, for the youthful critic adds: "They have now sent out Sir John Burgoyne, a nice, mild old gentleman, intended to be a sort of professional adviser to him. I suppose they have quiet chats about the Peninsular War together."

Lieutenant Graham, however, thought even less of Canrobert, whom he roundly dubbed a "ranting, perspiring braggadocio."

But, if his strategical genius was not highly developed, Lord Raglan did contrive to do something. This was to invent an overcoat that still bears his name. It is not every Commander-in-Chief who has done as much.

Unaffected by Lord Raglan's mishandling of the situation (as well as by the bullets and trenches and cholera and criminal imbecilities of the War Office), Valentine Baker returned to England with a "mention in despatches" and a couple of medals. He also got his troop. On, however, promotion to a majority, he was transferred to the Tenth Hussars. Good luck followed him there; and, within two years of joining them, he found himself a lieutenant-colonel.

As he was not yet thirty-three, such rapid promotion constituted something of a record. But it was well merited, for its recipient had special gifts. Thus, unlike the average cavalry officer of the period, his interests were not bound up in sport and going on leave. He took his profession seriously, and applied himself to mastering every detail of the branch with which he was connected. His ambition was to make the Tenth Hussars a pattern for all to copy. He succeeded to the full; and, under his fostering care, the Tenth (even if they "did not dance") had no rivals in drill or discipline.

Apart from skimming through drill-books and routine orders, it was not the custom among cavalry officers at that era to study anything of a more recondite description than *Ruff's Guide* or the columns of *Bell's Life*. Valentine Baker, however, being an exception, was an avid student of military history and tactics. He

read all he could on these subjects, and also lectured on them. Another of what were regarded as his idiosyncrasies was to spend his leave abroad, preferably where there happened to be fighting in progress. Thus, he followed the fortunes of Garibaldi in Italy ; and, during the earlier stages of the Franco-German War, he accompanied the Prussians on their march to Paris.

In 1873 Valentine Baker's thirst for professional knowledge led him to visit the Persian province of Khorassan, where he studied the advance of Russia in Central Asia and the rapid growth of the Czar's power on the Oxus, and embodied the result in a book, *Clouds in the East: Travels and Adventures on the Russo-Turkish Frontier*. He also made a point of watching the latest developments of foreign armies, concerning which he compiled some valuable reports. The War Office registered approval, and then promptly pigeon-holed them. It was on his return from one such expedition that he evolved a system of cavalry drill that rather upset previous ideas. The Duke of Cambridge, who objected on principle to anything that was not "regulation," was at first a little suspicious of such activities. Before long, however, he was championing them warmly. "Baker means business," he declared, when conservative and elderly veterans wedded to "tradition" found the young colonel held up as an example of the way they should go.

But if Valentine Baker worked hard, he also played hard. Gifted with great charm of manner, he was a popular figure in Society. All doors were open to him ; and he frequently dined at Marlborough House with the Prince of Wales, who had become colonel-in-chief of the regiment. Possessed of ample means (his wife being a rich woman), he also took an interest in the



COLONEL VALENTINE BAKER
Cashiered officer who recovered his sword.

drama, and was reported to have financed a theatre devoted to burlesque.

For upwards of twelve years Valentine Baker remained at the head of the Tenth Hussars winning golden opinions from all ranks. He stood well with the War Office, and would undoubtedly have become a general had a vacancy existed. Until one should occur, he went, in 1873, on half-pay. But his gifts were so conspicuous that further employment was soon found for him, and he was specially selected to serve as assistant-quartermaster-general at Aldershot. The position was a "plum," and might have led to anything—even to the baton of a field-marshal. What, however, it did lead to was something very different, for it was to prove its recipient's undoing.

Settling down in Aldershot, Valentine Baker enhanced his reputation, and soon showed himself as good a staff officer as he had been a regimental one. But it was not to last. A blow was about to fall that was to shatter everything.

On a memorable summer afternoon in 1875 Valentine Baker left the camp for London, where he was to dine that evening with the Duke of Cambridge.

"I'll be back here to-morrow," he said to a brother officer.

He did come back to Aldershot the next morning. But it was in a fashion that neither he nor anybody else had imagined possible.

An hour after his return a curious and disquieting whisper spread through the garrison, rushing like a whirlwind from one corner to another. Men heard it, and laughed incredulously. Yet, before long, they discovered that the whisper was well founded. Valentine Baker, ran the gossip that was soon in the mouth of

everybody—from veteran colonel to last-joined drummer-boy—had been arrested, and was already on his way to Guildford police-court, with a serious charge hanging over him. This was that of assaulting a young woman in a railway carriage on the previous afternoon.

As was to be expected, the newspapers made the most of it. “ Arrest of Cavalry Colonel ! ” appeared on the placards ; and, oblivious of the fact that the matter was still *sub judice*, Fleet Street filled columns upon columns with imaginative and distorted accounts of what was alleged to have happened. One journal, however, merely allowed itself a coy reference : “ The officer whose name is unhappily mixed up with this regrettable affair is universally considered a gallant soldier and a perfect gentleman.”

Never since the camp was first established had Aldershot known such a sensation. It seemed incredible. But, incredible or not, it was well founded. The next thing learned by the public was that the Guildford magistrates had committed the accused officer for trial at the forthcoming Croydon Assizes, and released him on substantial bail.

2

The Croydon Assizes opened on July 30 before Mr. Justice Brett. Accompanying him, in the capacity of judge’s marshal, was a young barrister who was afterwards destined to make a name for himself in the political arena. This was Alfred Lyttelton, a future Colonial Secretary. A body of distinguished counsel had also come down from London, the prosecution being conducted by Sergeant Parry, and the defence by Henry Hawkins, Q.C., and Sergeant Ballantine.

Owing to the serious nature of the charge and the

high position of the accused, the public gallery was filled to overflowing by an eager mob of both sexes. This circumstance appears to have shocked a privileged spectator. "It must," he wrote, "be recorded with feelings of disgust and horror that, in their anxiety not to avoid any of the sickening disclosures that might be offered, several women were among the crowd that clamoured for admission."

On his name being called, Colonel Baker had the indictment read to him. This contained three separate counts, with nice distinctions between them. Thus, the first count was that of attempting to commit a felonious assault; the second that of committing an indecent assault; and the third that of committing a common assault.

To help them in their deliberations, the judge began his charge to the grand jury with a learned exposition on the ethics of kissing.

"If," he said, "a man kisses a woman against her will, and with criminal passion or intent, such an act is an indecent assault. As you know, there are some kisses which are entirely proper. Thus, the kiss of a daughter by her father is a holy one, and the kiss of a playful assembly of young people may be perfectly harmless. But a kiss that gratifies or excites passion is undoubtedly indecent. Therefore, if you think that such was the reason of the conduct with which the accused is charged, you should find a bill for indecent assault. You must then also find a bill for common assault, since the mere laying of a man's hand upon a woman without her consent amounts to this."

Thus instructed, the grand jury returned a true bill. Thereupon, Sergeant Ballantine asked that the trial should be postponed until the next sessions, and put in

an affidavit that had been drawn up by his client. "I verily believe, and am so advised," ran this document, "that I cannot obtain a fair and impartial trial at the Croydon Summer Assizes before a common jury. . . . A very strong feeling at present exists against me, especially among the classes of which common juries are usually composed. I am desirous that the charges shall be tried before a special jury selected from among the same rank in society as the prosecutrix and myself."

The request seemed a reasonable one, for a considerable amount of prejudice had been imparted into the case. Public opinion ran high. A scurrilous pamphlet was being hawked in the streets, and malicious comments had appeared in a number of journals. Sergeant Parry, however, on behalf of the prosecutrix and her relatives, resisted the application. He was successful, for Mr. Justice Brett held that a Croydon jury was quite as good as a London one.

It was not until the following Monday that the trial actually began. As the day happened to be August Bank Holiday, a specially large crowd was attracted. If report is to be trusted, its behaviour left a good deal to be desired.

"The mob," says an eye-witness, "was in the ascendant ; and nothing could have been rougher than its conduct. From an early hour the roads leading to the Assize Court were thronged with vehicles of all descriptions, and learned counsel themselves had to struggle with the public for admission. One of them, indeed, was compelled to enter the building by the back and have his papers thrust through a barred window."

"The doors," adds somebody else, "were besieged by a clamouring throng among whom were many well-dressed women. While the police were guarding



MR. JUSTICE BRETT
Judge who sentenced Valentine Baker.

the entrance, a couple of so-called 'ladies' were lifted up to one of the windows, through which they were hoisted amid shouts and jeers. This highly irregular mode of ingress was then secured ; but several others were admitted by the cells and the prisoners' dock."

Among the more privileged spectators, some of whom sat beside Mr. Justice Brett, were the Marquess of Tavistock, the Earl of Lucan, and Lord Halifax, and a number of officers from Aldershot.

Surrendering to his bail, Colonel Baker (described by a reporter as "adopting a nonchalant, yet respectful air") pleaded "not guilty." Thereupon Sergeant Parry, who was conducting the prosecution, addressed the Court.

"I much regret," he said, "the defendant's position. He is a distinguished officer, and is charged with a cowardly and unmanly attack upon a young lady in a railway carriage. This young lady is Miss Rebecca Kate Dickinson, living with her mother and sisters at Midhurst."

Counsel then proceeded to outline the case he was prepared to prove by the testimony of witnesses. The story he unfolded was an astonishing one.

On the afternoon of June 17, ran the narrative, Miss Dickinson, the prosecutrix, a young lady of twenty-two, was travelling in an empty first-class carriage from Midhurst to London. At Liphook, where there was a stop, Colonel Baker, who was a married man of fifty, entered the carriage and sat down opposite her. He enquired if she felt a draught and would like the window shut. This conversational opening, not being repulsed, was promptly followed up, and they began to talk. The subjects discussed by them were perfectly innocent, such as the Academy and the

London theatres and foreign travel. As soon as they left Woking, however, Colonel Baker's manner changed. He asked Miss Dickinson embarrassing questions, enquired her name, begged her to meet him in London, and finally put his arm round her waist and kissed her by force. Thereupon she attempted to pull the communication-bell. As this was broken, she jumped on to the footboard and clung to the door, screaming for help. A man working on the line noticed her predicament and had the train stopped by signal at Esher, where the guard enquired what had happened. On hearing Miss Dickinson's story, he handed her over to the care of a fellow-passenger, the Rev. Mr. Brown, and then locked Colonel Baker into a carriage occupied by two gentlemen. At Waterloo the party had their names and addresses taken by one of the officials. Advised by Mr. Brown, Miss Dickinson made no definite charge against Colonel Baker, who was then allowed to leave, but reported the occurrence to her three brothers, a doctor, a barrister, and a subaltern in the Royal Engineers. At their instigation, a warrant was issued, and Colonel Baker was arrested the next day. "If by any act of mine," he had said, when before the magistrate, "I have caused Miss Dickinson annoyance, I beg to express my most unqualified regret. Still, I solemnly declare that what she has told you has been under the influence of exaggerated fear and alarm. As for the police-constable at Waterloo, his evidence is false."

Before sitting down, Sergeant Parry paid a tribute to the other side :

"My learned friend, Mr. Hawkins," he said, "who appeared for the defendant at the magisterial enquiry, adopted an honourable course. He refused to embarrass

Miss Dickinson with a single question that could have cast the least reflection upon her."

Having outlined his case, Sergeant Parry called Miss Dickinson herself. "She is," declared a reporter, "a winsome young lady of distinctly prepossessing appearance. Her costume was of dark silk, trimmed with beads and bugles, a feathered black hat, and lavender gloves. She gave her evidence in a silvery musical voice, and without the slightest hesitation. It was clear that she had nerved herself for the very trying ordeal confronting her, and her modest and ladylike demeanour won the sympathy of all."

Miss Dickinson's examination was entrusted to Mr. Poland. She had very little to add to the facts already given by Sergeant Parry. Colonel Baker's conduct, she said, had been quite unobjectionable until the train left Woking. He then asked her name, and suggested that they should meet somewhere, and also that she should write to him. When she refused, he got up and sat beside her.

"What happened next?" enquired counsel. "Just tell us in your own words."

"I said, 'Get away from me. I won't have you so near.' He said, 'Now you are getting cross.' Then he put his arm round my waist and kissed me. When I pushed him off, and tried to ring the bell and attract the guard, he said, 'Don't ring; don't call the guard.' I managed to open the door, and stepped on to the footboard, propping myself up on my elbow. Colonel Baker held me there. I said, 'If you let me go, I shall fall.'"

"But you didn't fall?"

"No. I held on outside the carriage for some distance."

"Did the defendant put his arm round you?" enquired the judge.

"I cannot tell what he did, but I think he had hold of me. While I was screaming for help, he said, 'If you get in, I will get out by the other door. Then everything will be all right.'"

"Did he say anything when the train stopped?" was the next question.

"Yes, he said, 'Please don't say anything about what has happened, or you will get me into trouble. Just tell the guard you were frightened.'"

Miss Dickinson, however, did say something. What she said, when the guard came to enquire why she was hanging in a perilous position outside the carriage, was, "This man has insulted me, and will not leave me alone."

Asked what had happened at Waterloo, Miss Dickinson said that, although she had not actually charged him, she had complained of Colonel Baker's conduct to the superintendent of the line; and that, accompanied by the Rev. Mr. Brown, she had then gone to the house of her brother, a doctor attached to St. George's Hospital. The next morning she went with him to a magistrate and applied for a warrant.

The other witnesses then called by the prosecution were the guard of the train, a police-constable at Waterloo, and some fellow-passengers in the next carriage. The latter said they had heard Miss Dickinson screaming for help, and saw her standing on the foot-board; the Rev. Mr. Brown described how he had escorted her during the rest of the journey to London; and the policeman declared that Colonel Baker, who had given his correct name and address, had said to him in the superintendent's office, "I am sorry I did

it. I do not know what possessed me." He had then said to Miss Dickinson, "Let me write to your brother. I will explain everything to him."

All the forensic skill of which he was capable was employed by Sergeant Parry to confuse morality with law ; and, in his effort to secure a verdict, he pressed to the utmost the most serious of the three charges. Very properly, the attempt was resisted with similar vigour by the defence. This was entrusted to Hawkins, Q.C. From the outset he was handicapped, since—his instructions being that Miss Dickinson was not to be embarrassed by him in any way—he could call no witnesses to upset her story. Still, he did all that was possible in the circumstances ; and if he had a "bad job," he certainly made the best of it.

After remarking that the prosecution "had appealed to the feelings of the jury, rather than to the sense of fairness that becomes a court of justice," he proceeded to discuss the case from his own point of view. Realising that nothing was to be gained by glossing over awkward facts, he admitted them candidly :

"In the whole of my somewhat lengthy experience," he said, "I have seldom had entrusted to me a more painful or difficult task than this one. It is perhaps specially difficult, because, on coming into court this morning, Sergeant Ballantine and myself witnessed a scene of such popular excitement as I have never yet witnessed, and such as I pray to God I shall never again witness. . . . From the hour when he was first confronted with this charge, Colonel Baker's attitude has been that of a man who knows he has done wrong, and is anxious to make all possible reparation. But his lips are closed. I cannot call him to give you his account of this matter. Yet, how can I or any other man argue in the face of the evidence we have heard that he has not been guilty of an assault ? I

will not insult the jury by asking them to say that he has not committed an assault. I do not for one moment attempt to justify his conduct. To adopt such a step would be wrong of me. But there are three separate charges against the defendant, and he is most anxious that you should not confound them. Colonel Baker wishes to bear testimony to Miss Dickinson's purity and modesty. He has endeavoured to make reparation. While none can be made by him to the Law in respect of that portion of the offence of which he is unquestionably guilty, he is prepared, and with a deeply contrite heart, to make any other reparation that is possible. He professes the most profound regret, the most deep and lasting remorse, for what has happened ; and he awaits with the most terrible anxiety your verdict upon the most serious of the three charges confronting him. He awaits it with emotion ; and, for myself, I pray to God that you may be wisely guided in your conclusions. I have now only to add that I am convinced you will do your duty firmly, honestly, and calmly, and without prejudice or favour."

Counsel on either side having finished their respective tasks, Mr. Justice Brett proceeded to deliver his summing-up. In the course of this he explained to the jury the sharp distinctions that existed between the different counts in the indictment, and warned them as to the nature of the proof that was required to support them. "It is not for you," he said, at the end of a long harangue, "to do as you like. I have told you the law, and you must act as the law directs. But remember, it is a principle of British justice that, in settling a doubtful point, a jury should always adopt the more merciful conclusion. You have nothing to do with the matter of punishment. Exercise your minds and your intellects, but not your passions, and answer the questions I have put."

The jury then retired to consider their verdict. On their return, at the end of ten minutes, they announced that they found Colonel Baker guilty of committing an assault. Thereupon, Sergeant Ballantine asked that witnesses as to character should be heard ; and Sir Richard Airey, Adjutant-General to the Forces, and Sir Thomas Steele, commanding the garrison at Aldershot, paid a high tribute to the accused officer. "He is," said Sir Richard, "one of the Army's greatest ornaments" ; and "Her Majesty has no better soldier or more valuable officer," declared Sir Thomas.

The tragic drama was drawing to a close. The verdict having been recorded, nothing remained but for Mr. Justice Brett to pronounce sentence. As was his custom at such times, he endeavoured to "improve the occasion" by delivering a solemn lecture.

"Prisoner at the bar," he began, "when this appalling story was first published, a thrill of horror rang through the country at learning that a young and innocent girl, travelling by a public conveyance, had been compelled to risk her life in order to protect herself from gross outrage. Every section of society felt as if it had received a personal injury. . . . You have had a patient and dispassionate trial ; and the jury have most properly, most fairly, and most honestly, absolved you from the most serious charge. They have found you guilty of an offence of which no man who has heard the evidence that has been submitted could doubt your guilt. It may perhaps be suggested that this libertine outrage has defiled this virtuous victim. It has not done so. Miss Dickinson leaves this court as pure and as innocent as ever ; and, not only without a stain on her character, but with an added lustre—a fresh measure of glory—to her equipment of youth and beauty. . . . I have heard from two distinguished officers of the high

position you have held ; and it grieves me to see a gallant soldier—one who has rendered distinguished service to his country—in this unfortunate position. At the same time, I am willing to think that your conduct was the outcome of temporary loss of self-control, and that you now appreciate the folly of your act. In order that you may even yet have a chance of re-establishing your character and rendering further services to your country, should they be required, I shall pass a sentence that will make such a step possible. The sentence is that you be imprisoned for one year. But you will be imprisoned as a misdemeanant of lesser degree, and will be spared a certain amount of the physical indignity and degradation accompanying ordinary imprisonment. You will also pay the costs of this prosecution and a fine of £500, or undergo an additional three months' imprisonment."

Immediately after the Court had risen, Colonel Baker was removed in a cab to Horsemonger Lane Gaol, the county prison, where the sentence was to be served.

3

Owing to the fact that he was treated as a first-class misdemeanant Colonel Baker had various concessions accorded him. Thus, he occupied a furnished room (instead of a cell), had his food from a restaurant (instead of from the prison kitchen), and was allowed books and newspapers, and daily visits from his friends. Not unnaturally, there was something of an outcry that such a departure from the normal routine should be observed in this case, especially when it was remembered that the same judge had recently passed a stiff sentence, involving the treadmill and plank bed and

skilly, on some gas stokers who had struck for better wages. Somebody wrote from the Reform Club, hinting that "influence" had been brought to bear; and somebody else wanted to know why the charge had been dealt with as a "mere peccadillo."

Questions, too, were asked in Parliament, and Dr. Kenealy was delivered of a long and bitter diatribe, full of fustian and clap-trap, about the "inadequacy" of Colonel Baker's sentence. This, he declared, was "no penalty at all, if unaccompanied by the hard physical labour and severe discipline to which convicted criminals are properly subjected."

The *Hansard* report of this effort is instructive :

"The Hon. Member for Stoke believed every man in the country who rightly valued the preservation of our laws and liberties would agree with him that, in the administration of justice, there ought to be nothing like class distinction; but, according to the sentence passed by the learned Judge on Colonel Baker, it would appear that the rank of a defendant was to be the standard by which sentences were to be imposed—that there was to be one class of sentence for dukes, earls, and marquesses, and an entirely different class of sentence for persons in a lower section of society. . . . The description which the lady gave of the transaction was calculated to excite a feeling of the highest indignation, and that indignation would be increased by the sentence, which was really no punishment at all, for one of the most scandalous and atrocious crimes ever committed. . . . This man, because he happened to be a colonel in the Army and was supposed to be a brilliant ornament in certain circles of society, received a sentence that only meant that the rank and fashionable surroundings of colonels in the Army should be allowed to stand between them and justice."

Dr. Kenealy's indignation did not ring very true, for, as it happened, he himself had been convicted of an unwarrantable assault on his own illegitimate son. For this he had undergone a term of imprisonment, and, as with Colonel Baker, in the "first class."

Charles Reade, always a doughty champion of anyone in trouble, joined in the controversy. As was his custom, he approached it with more sophistry than logic.

"A great many journals," he wrote, "have told the public that an English judge has passed too lenient a sentence on Colonel Baker because he belongs to the upper classes. Every day men of the lower orders commit two thousand such assaults on women of the lower orders, and it is thought so little of that they are rarely brought to justice. When they are, it is to a magistrate, and not to a jury, that the women apply. It is dealt with on the spot by a small fine or a very short imprisonment. Colonel Baker, had he been a navvy, would have had one month. . . . Of this I am absolutely sure, that Baker's sentence is severe beyond all precedent. His fine is more than double the previous fine. His imprisonment, if not shortened, will be about four times what, if the female had been in humble life, a blackguard by descent and inheritance would have got."

An ingenuous argument was also advanced to the effect that prolonged residence abroad had given Colonel Baker a false idea of an Englishwoman's standard of morality. "Accustomed," wrote an apologist, "to meet with sham resistance, he failed to realise that Miss Dickinson's resistance was genuine."

The Press also took sides, and discussed the wretched business in hundreds of columns. Among them, the

World was one of the few organs that managed to keep its head :

“ With the evidence before them,” remarked this authority, “ the jury could have arrived at no other decision ; nor can we see that the defendant had anything of which to complain in the summing-up of Mr. Justice Brett.”

The comments of the *Spectator* were characteristically solemn and impartial :

“ The mob could not believe that a ‘ Colonel of the Tenth,’ a man well known in society, an acquaintance of the highest personages, a man who could engage the first counsel, and for whom any amount of bail was immediately forthcoming, would be tried like anybody else, and receive, if guilty, an ordinary punishment. . . . Nor was the popular suspiciousness wholly without justification. Colonel Baker did not benefit by his position so much as to escape either a righteous verdict or a just sentence ; but he did benefit by it to obtain a trial exceptionally fair. We have no serious fault to find either with the Judge’s charge, or the verdict, or the sentence. . . . The judicial exposition of Colonel Baker’s motives was a specimen of subtle analysis such as would have delighted Balzac, and was probably entirely accurate ; but whether a little tailor accused of assaulting an apprentice-girl would have got the full benefit of it may be reasonably doubted. Certainly, no tailor would have heard the expression of the Judge’s hope that he would redeem himself by some brilliant achievement, or have obtained from the most successful counsel of the day an eloquent description of his deep remorse.”

“ This is one of those cases,” remarked a tearful leader-writer, in a journal appealing to another class, “ that show how little the base and uncontrolled brutality of our nature is affected by the external

influences of what are called the refinements of life ; and it is not well that the revolting details should be dwelt upon."

None the less, this high-minded organ, after first dubbing the case " a monstrous example of ungoverned animalism," found room for eleven closely printed columns of evidence. To this it added a full page of " Scenes in Court."

" We regret to observe," wrote somebody else, " that this shocking affair has been made the subject of ribald songs and burlesques ; and these have been delivered in places at the very thought of which any virtuous young lady must positively shudder."

A Service journal reflected the opinion of soldiers, the majority of whom felt that justice could have been secured by the adoption of less drastic measures :

" We think that nothing has been gained by these proceedings but the ruin of an unfortunate gentleman ; and that, *per contra*, a name which everyone must wish to see held in the highest respect has now secured an unpleasant notoriety."

In a passing allusion to the trial, the anonymous author of a book of memoirs, *London in the 'Sixties*, said much the same thing. He wrapped it up, however, in less stilted language :

" When Valentine Baker began casting sheep's eyes at the demure maiden reading the *Family Herald* in a South-Western compartment, he little realised that the price he was paying might have been commuted elsewhere by the judicious expenditure of a five-pound note. Twenty thousand in hard cash, the command of a great regiment, and social annihilation—for what ? And when Mr. Justice Brett began his charge to the jury with, ' A man we looked to as a protector of our women and children,' there was not

a soldier present who did not internally vow that henceforth—be it in a first-class or third-class compartment, be it in Piccadilly Circus or the British Museum—a woman should be his constant care, and, if necessary, any tadpole that lawfully pertained to her.”

What seemed to be forgotten by the general public (but what Mr. Justice Brett clearly had in mind) was that his imprisonment, though farcical, was not the only penalty inflicted on Colonel Baker. At one fell swoop he had lost his rank, his name, and his honour. He also suffered in his pocket, since, having joined in the days of purchase, he forfeited all the sums that his various steps had cost him. The total amount could not have been less than £20,000. With the idea of avoiding such forfeiture, he had tendered the resignation of his commission ; and the Duke of Cambridge had recommended the Queen to accept it. Her Majesty, however, took the view that stronger measures were called for, and, as a result, the following announcement appeared in the *London Gazette* : “ Lieut.-Colonel and Brevet-Colonel Valentine Baker, half-pay, late 10th Hussars, has been removed from the Army, her Majesty having no further occasion for his services. Dated 2nd August, 1875.”

There are two sides to every story. So far, the public had only heard that of Miss Dickinson. They were never to hear any other. Colonel Baker might have had something—perhaps a good deal—to say. But he said nothing. It was the better part. Writing, years afterwards, his counsel acknowledged to the full his chivalrous attitude in accepting, without challenge, the testimony of the prosecutrix.

“ The assault alleged,” he wrote, “ was doubtless of

a most serious character, if proved. I say nothing what might, or might not, have been proved. But speaking as an advocate, I will not hesitate to affirm that cross-examination may sometimes save one person's character without in the least affecting that of another. But this was not to be. Whatever line of defence my experience might have suggested, I was debarred by his express command from putting a single question. I say to his honour that, as a gentleman and a British officer, he preferred to take to himself the ruin of his own character, the forfeiture of his commission in the Army, the loss of social status, and *all* that could make life worth living, to casting even a doubt on the lady's veracity in the witness-box."

In writing this, Hawkins's memory did not serve him very well, for, as it happened, he had put a number of questions to Miss Dickinson. Still, they had not been of a nature to which she could object.

4

Although he had been cashiered and stripped of his rank, Valentine Baker was not without staunch friends. One of them was Lord John Manners. "Why," ran a letter from him to Lord Cranbrook, "should you and Salisbury not agree to send Baker, when he comes out of prison, abroad to buy horses for the Indian Army? It would be a pity for the State to lose his energy and ability."

But Lord Cranbrook, who was at the War Office, would not adopt this proposal. Thereupon, another string was pulled, and Lord Wolseley suggested that he should be employed in Cyprus. Once again, however, nothing came of it.



HENRY HAWKINS, Q.C.
Counsel for Valentine Baker.

Still, if England had no use for Valentine Baker's sword, there were other countries that did have one ; and in August 1877 the Sultan of Turkey, then at war with Russia, offered him an appointment in the Ottoman Army. Accepting the position, he left England and proceeded to Shumla, where he was to act as military adviser to Suleiman Pasha. This warrior was said by the Sultan (but not by anybody else) to have evolved a scheme for defeating the Russians. On looking into it, however, Baker soon discovered that it was principally concerned with lounging in cafés and smoking cigarettes, and sending vainglorious telegrams to Constantinople reporting "decisive victories." As many of his staff shared their chief's opinion, the English recruit had to shoulder the brunt of the work to be done. It was not long before he made his influence felt.

On being entrusted by the Grand Vizier, Edhem Pasha, with an independent command in another theatre, Baker found his position much improved. But it was not devoid of difficulties. One was that a proportion of his troops had no real stomach for fighting, and would absent themselves at a critical moment. "The wretched Mustafis," he wrote, "were deserting in such numbers that the force was now diminishing at the rate of 1000 a day." To check this habit among them, he had a batch of fourteen, who had been captured by his military police, put up against a wall and shot. This rough-and-ready method of stopping the practice was less effective than he could have wished, for, he adds, "still the desertions continued." Instead of a firing-party at dawn, he then had recourse to a "long and very strong stick, which served as an emblem of discipline and justice."

The Sultan had made a good choice. Throughout

the Russo-Turkish War of 1877 Valentine Baker distinguished himself repeatedly ; and, after the fall of Plevna, and the capture of the garrison, he performed brilliant service in the Balkans, covering the retreat of Suleiman Pasha from Octuroi to Constantinople. "The situation was difficult," he wrote with soldierly brevity. But he handled it in masterly fashion ; and the rear-guard action which he fought at Tashkessen, holding the Schipka Pass against Gourko's army of 50,000, was carried out so skilfully that it was long accepted as a model by lecturers on tactics.

Valentine Baker, who wielded a good descriptive pen, has, in his *War in Bulgaria*, a vivid picture of the scene :

"Slowly the minutes passed away, but the long day was drawing to its close.

"The shades of evening were falling fast around us ; but our trials were not yet destined to be over. Night was so near that the flash of every rifle could be distinctly seen. Then the Russians drew themselves together for a last desperate effort. Bringing up fresh troops, they came tramping on over the blood-stained snow, determined now to storm the hotly-contested hill. Despite the withering fire from the rocks, they still pushed up and reached the summit. With a cry to Allah, the mountaineers sprang to their feet. Dashing forward with the bayonet, they closed in deadly conflict with the stalwart giants of the Russian Guard and drove them headlong down the height.

"In a few minutes the fire all along the line died away. The tired Turkish soldiers knew that the day was won. Pale, and exhausted by the long continued struggle, they clambered upon the rocks, their faces fierce with the glint of battle. Blood-stained and wounded, as many of them were, they waved their weapons in the air and hurled defiance at the retreat-

ing foe. And many a dying man raised himself up with an expiring effort, and spent his last breath in that loud shout of victory."

By the way, it was while he was serving under the Sultan's flag that Baker met an old friend. This was Captain (afterwards Colonel) Burnaby, of the Royal Horse Guards, who had come out "to see the fun." Nominally, however, since England was neutral, his position was that of "travelling representative of the Stafford House Committee," a volunteer body performing Red Cross work.

The valuable services of Valentine Baker were not overlooked by the Sultan ; and, in recognition of them, he was granted the rank of *ferik*, or general, carrying with it the title of Pasha. Wanting a change of scene, he then took the opportunity of returning to England. Considering the circumstances under which he had left the country, the experiment was, perhaps, a daring one. Still, he had no reason to regret it. Throughout the war Great Britain had sided very much with the Crescent. Pro-Turkish gatherings had been held at Stafford House, and music-hall patrons had bellowed at the tops of their voices that "The Russians shall not have Constan-ti-nople !" The result was, when he found himself in London, he was a popular figure everywhere ; and Lady Charlemont and other prominent hostesses gave dinner-parties, "To meet General Valentine Baker." But what he specially valued was his re-election, in the summer of 1881, to the Service Club from which he had been compelled to withdraw. It was a good gesture on the part of the committee. Still, the ballot was not entirely unanimous ; and "a very close shave" was the sour comment of an obscure journal.

5

Valentine Baker's brilliant work in the Balkans and elsewhere was not overlooked by other Powers in want of a strong man ; and in 1882 he was invited by the Khedive to reorganise the Egyptian Army. As this promised more scope for his activities, he accepted the offer and hurried off to Cairo. But when he got there, it was to hear that the British Cabinet, with whom rested the ultimate decision, had refused to sanction the appointment and selected Sir Evelyn Wood in his stead.

"Baker Pasha," wrote Lord Grenfell, "had been badly treated by the Government, first of all in being nominated as Sirdar, and the order cancelled on the plea that he was not then on active service in the British Army. Baker Pasha was a soldier to the backbone ; he had done splendid work with the Turkish troops, and had proved his skill and capacity under the Sultan."

At the instance of Lord Wolseley, who had always held a high opinion of him, other employment was found for Baker, and he was given the command of a force of Gendarmerie, a body which had been established to preserve civil order. They did nothing of the kind. Since, however, they were recruited from a rabble which had enlisted merely for the sake of liberal pay and rations, nothing else could well have been expected of them.

As, however, was Baker's custom, he buckled to his task, and did wonders with the material so grudgingly given him, instilling into it a measure of discipline and order. "We are getting on very steadily," he wrote, "but the great difficulty with which we have to contend

is the uncertainty of the Home Government's plans as to the duration of the occupation."

Where this matter was concerned, Valentine Baker had been badly let down, for he had been officially assured that England was resolved to administer the the Sudan. Confident that the promise would be kept, he had induced a number of sheikhs to volunteer their support. When, however, they learned that the Sudan was to be evacuated, they declared that they would have to side with the Baggara.

"It is necessary," said the envoys whom Baker consulted, "that we should act in this fashion. If we do not have help from England, our warriors will be put to the sword, our wives will be ravished, and our children will be sold into slavery." Further, they declared that Osman Digna had pledged the word of the Mahdi himself that all who rallied round the standard of the Prophet would be "received into everlasting Paradise." This was more than Valentine Baker, even in his most optimistic moments, felt justified in promising. The result was, some thousands of desert warriors were, much against their will, compelled to go over to the enemy. They also took with them a considerable quantity of stores and ammunition.

By the winter of 1883 the situation in the Sudan had (as a result of the reverses to the Khedivial forces, followed by the capture of El Obeid and the rout of Hicks Pasha) become so serious that drastic steps to deal with it had to be adopted. It was necessary to fill the gaps with fresh material. Accordingly, the Gendarmerie, together with a tag-rag-and-bobtail recruited from the slums, were hurriedly despatched to relieve the hard-pressed garrisons still holding their own, but against desperate odds, in the scattered

outposts. Valentine Baker was given a handful of British officers to help him in his task ; but the rank and file composing the force cared so little about the prospect of trying conclusions with the Mahdi's bloodthirsty followers that hundreds of them deserted before they left the Cairo barracks, and others had to be driven along in chains. However, they eventually reached their objective, Suakin, inadequately equipped and utterly dispirited.

To add to his troubles, Valentine Baker had no sooner arrived in camp than he was confronted with something resembling a mutiny. He consulted a sheikh (described as "friendly") as to the best method of restoring discipline without recourse to extremities. Through an interpreter, the sheikh suggested that the ringleaders should be "shot first and pardoned afterwards." Although this action would perhaps have short-circuited matters, Baker Pasha declined to adopt it.

The task of making bricks without an adequate supply of straw was trifling compared with that which had been demanded of Valentine Baker. "The composition of this absurd expedition," wrote Sir William Butler, "and the commission given to its commander are to-day accurate measures by which judgment can be formed upon the foresight and ability of the English administration then in power in Cairo. Baker Pasha was to have 'supreme military and civil command in all parts of the Sudan which might be reached by his forces.' He was also commissioned to 'pacify the country between Suakin and Berber, 240 miles ! but was only to resort to force after all other means of conciliation had failed.' "

Before he left Cairo, Baker had been promised ample stores and supplies, together with additional troops

when they should be wanted. But he was dealing with bureaucrats, and the promises had the consistency of pie-crust. There was no real intention of keeping them. "Nothing at all has come," he wrote in a despatch. "It is too bad! Sinkat and Tokar are a great anxiety to me. But I cannot serve them without help from Cairo."

His protests fell on deaf ears. Not a man, not a cartridge, was disgorged.

"I was vilified in the British Press," wrote Sir Evelyn Wood, "for not sending rifles to Suakin when they were demanded by Baker Pasha in order that he might arm the 'Friendlies.' But I had nothing to do with the decision, which was one taken by the Egyptian Government."

But if they did not send the promised reinforcements, the Cairo authorities did send something else. They filled river steamers with the disconsolate wives of the Gendarmerie and despatched them up the Nile. When Baker said that he would prefer a few machine-guns, the bureaucrats took it as a bad jest and registered a black mark against his name.

"By Allah! He is always giving trouble," they said, as they wriggled on their office stools. "Why cannot he leave us to manage the affair?"

This sort of thing was a bad beginning. Worse, however, was to follow; and when Osman Digna's hosts swooped down upon them at El Teb, Baker's rabble, seized with sheer panic, abandoned their position and fled ignominiously. An eye-witness thus described the scene: "Cavalry, infantry, mules, falling baggage, and wounded and dying men by the hundred, all crushed into a struggling, surging mass. The Egyptians among them were shrieking with terror,

hardly attempting to run away, but endeavouring to shelter themselves one behind the other." Altogether, it was a shocking business, as the enemy, after accounting for 2000 in killed and wounded, captured all their guns and stores and ammunition ; and it was only by dint of his personal courage and good leadership that their commander extricated the remnant.

In the *Life and Letters of Lieut.-General Sir Gerald Graham* the unfortunate episode is alluded to as follows :

"Towards the end of the year 1883, Osman Digna having met with several important successes in the neighbourhood of Sinkat and Suakin, Lieut.-General Valentine Baker Pasha was sent from Cairo on 19th December to crush him. Baker arrived at Suakin on the 23rd December, and was invested with supreme civil and military command in the Eastern Sudan. Leaving a force to garrison Suakin, Baker, with some 4000 men, disembarked on the 2nd February, 1884, at Trinkitat for the relief of Tokar. Two days later his force was cut to pieces near El Teb, his Egyptians being completely demoralised."

From one disaster to another. Sinkat, which Baker's "army" had been sent to relieve, fell next, the entire garrison being put to the sword ; and, before a month had elapsed, Tokar was also invested and occupied by the Mahdi. Khartoum and Berber still held out ; but the situation in the Eastern Sudan had become desperate, and practically the whole of the Red Sea Littoral was threatened.

The hour brings the man. Valentine Baker, always at his best in an emergency, kept his head. Refusing to be discouraged, he submitted various suggestions for recovering the lost ground. But, as can be gathered from a letter which Sir Evelyn Wood wrote to Lord

Wolseley in January 1884, they fell on unreceptive ears : " Baker proposed a scheme for marching with 12,000 men to Khartoum via Kassala and Abour Haraz. . . . Gordon would not listen to it for a moment."

The fact that bodies of Egyptian troops had now twice met with serious reverses put an abrupt stop to the continuance of England's policy of " non-interference " in the Sudan.

Public opinion was sufficiently stirred to insist on employing a British expeditionary force " to clean up the mess." One of the regiments selected for the purpose was the Tenth Hussars. When the troopship bringing them from India arrived at Suakin, it was met by General Baker. As several of the officers still serving with them had been under his command when he left the regiment, the meeting might have been a little embarrassing. If, however, he had felt any doubts as to his welcome at their hands, they were promptly removed. " The reception on board the *Jumna* of our old colonel," wrote one of them, " was splendid. We were all delighted to see him among us. Everybody cheered him. He had a guard of honour, and the band played ' Auld Lang Syne.' "

It was General Baker's most cherished ambition to serve once more with his old regiment ; and he applied to be attached to it in any capacity, volunteering to forego rank and pay. But the stranglehold of red-tape made this impossible. He was, however, employed on the staff under Sir Gerald Graham, a comrade of Crimean days ; and, by his resourcefulness and knowledge of local conditions, rendered valuable service. At the second battle of El-Teb he was badly wounded, together with his old comrade-in-arms, Colonel Burnaby.

" We were talking together," wrote Major Wood,

R.E., who was beside him in the square, "when Baker Pasha suddenly clapped his hand to his face ; and, as he involuntarily twitched the bridle, his horse spun round completely. Yet Baker never moved ; and in an instant was sitting erect, facing the enemy's guns. . . . It was marvellous that he was not knocked out of the saddle, for the shot, which had lodged in his palate, weighed $2\frac{1}{2}$ ounces."

"A horrid wound," added Sir John Ardagh. "The cheek was so torn that the doctor strapped it up without perceiving that the shot was still there. It was not extracted till the following day."

In his official despatch, sent to England after the action, Sir Gerald Graham, commanding the Tokar Expeditionary Force, wrote :

"My thanks are also due to Lieut.-General Baker Pasha for the valuable information and assistance rendered by him throughout the operations. General Baker was, I regret to say, severely wounded in the early part of the action on the 29th February. His wound was in the face, and must have been very painful ; notwithstanding which, after getting it dressed, he returned to the field ; and only at the end of the action could I persuade him to retire to the base."

6

Things having quietened down in the Sudan, Valentine Baker, in the summer of 1884, took the opportunity of returning to England for medical treatment. The doctors there did much to improve his health. What, however, did him more good than anything else was the knowledge that a suggestion was on foot to restore him to the *Army List*. A strong committee had the matter in hand ; and a proposal

was made to present a petition on his behalf to the Queen. As the idea had the full support of the Prince of Wales and the Duke of Cambridge, and also that of Lord Wolseley and Sir Evelyn Baring, it was confidently hoped that their efforts would be crowned with success.

But the committee's optimism was to receive a setback. If Valentine Baker had friends, he also had enemies. The latter, forgetting his distinguished services and personal heroism, could only remember his unhappy slip. That, too, the race of Pharisees was not extinct was clear from the following letter in the columns of the *Spectator* :

"Some time ago I was asked to join in an effort about to be made (so it was said) to reinstate Baker Pasha in the military service of the Crown. I refused, and hoped to hear no more of the matter—feeling, as it would seem, much too confidently, that nothing would come of so unwise a proposal. Within the last few days I hear that, so far from having been abandoned, it is obtaining wide support and sanction amongst persons of character and standing, including Members of both Houses. You, Sir, will be, no doubt, aware whether this is so. If it be, it is high time that some public protest were made."

It is difficult to think of the author of *Tom Brown's School Days* as siding with the Mawworms. None the less, this letter was written by Thomas Hughes.

A smug editorial on the subject also appeared in another journal :

"We are sorry to learn that a petition to the Queen has been drawn up, praying for the restoration of Baker Pasha to the British Army. Such a request is really, though of course not intentionally, an insult to her Majesty. The subject is a disagreeable one, and we would gladly have been spared the pain of

referring to it. But Baker Pasha's injudicious friends have forced it upon the public. By their ill-advised efforts to procure the re-grant of his commission they have created the necessity of re-stating the reason why he was deprived of it. We cannot believe that all the persons who have been rushing into print on behalf of this cashiered officer are really acquainted with the facts of the case. . . . It is impossible that either the Queen or the Secretary of State for War could listen for a moment to the proposal so indecorously made."

An obscure organ called *Modern Society* followed this lead, and affected to be much hurt at the bare suggestion having ever been advanced :

"A number of our readers," it declared in a column of tearful clap-trap, "have taken exception to the remarks we have made about the re-admission of Valentine Baker into society ; but we are pleased to record that—apart from a handful of indiscreet people outside the charmed circle to which the Prince of Wales belongs, and various interested friends and aristocratic boon companions—there are few in favour of his reinstatement. . . . If the honour and virtue of our daughters are to be held of such little moment as Valentine Baker's 'friends' would have us believe, it would be as well to shut up all churches and chapels and allow everyone to go his or her own way. . . . Lust and licence have enough latitude already ; and if this ex-officer is to be pardoned, it will mean that a woman's honour is a mere plaything."

The *World*, on the other hand, took a generous view :

"The time has come for the complete rehabilitation of Valentine Baker. His offence has been more than condoned. . . . Already he has been exonerated by that informal public opinion which, after all, is the mainspring of our social life. He has been restored to the friendly intimacy of some of the highest in the

land. One of the best of the Service clubs has, by re-admitting him to membership, practically reversed his attainer. Yet more, his old regiment—that distinguished corps, the 10th Hussars—has received him with open arms. It is perfectly plain that the British Army might re-admit such a man without any loss to its prestige. His restoration and rehabilitation would be a gracious and politic act—for good soldiers are scarce—and should be no longer delayed.”

But it was delayed. As a matter of fact, it never materialised ; and when the petition, bearing several thousand signatures, was presented, Her Majesty refused to grant it. The rigid standpoint she adopted was “once cashiered, always cashiered.”

The columns of the *Standard* were thrown open to a lively correspondence on the merits of the case. “An English Lady” was very indignant that there should be any suggestion of restoring the forfeited commission ; and “A Scottish Lady” was equally emphatic that “Our Army would not be any the worse for a few more officers of General Baker’s stamp.” Thereupon another correspondent, signing herself “A Peer’s Daughter” (but giving no further particulars of her paternity), leapt into the breach :

“I write to express my warm approval (and that of my lady friends) of the letter from ‘An English Lady.’ For myself, I will point out that, being the wife of a lieut.-colonel and having a knowledge of the manners and customs of English ‘ladies’ (especially those with whom one is forced to associate in military life), I think their conduct is decidedly low. . . . The fact that one prominent ‘lady’ lives in open adultery with a cavalry officer has afforded five English ladies of my acquaintance with subject matter for a piquant chat the other afternoon.”

This attracted two hundred replies the next morning, the majority of which were angry disclaimers.

Valentine Baker had received many hard knocks in his time. But another one was to follow, for somebody thought it necessary to champion him in the following verses :

A TALE OF THE TENTH HUSSARS

When the sand of the lonely desert has
Covered the plains of strife,
Where the English fought for the rescue,
And the Arab stood for his life ;
When the crash of battle is over, and
Healed are our wounds and scars,
There will live in our Island story
A Tale of the Tenth Hussars.

They had charged in the grand old fashion,
With furious shout and swoop,
With a " Follow me, lads," from the Colonel
And an answering roar from the troop :
From the Staff, as the troopers passed it,
In glory of pride and pluck,
They heard, and they never forgot it—
One following shout, " Good Luck ! "

Wounded and worn, he sat there,
In silence of pride and pain,
The man who'd led them often, but was
Never to lead them again.
Think of the secret anguish !
Think of the dull remorse !
To see the Hussars led past him,
Unled by the old White Horse !

An alien, not a stranger, with
Heart of a comrade still,
He had borne his sorrow bravely
As a soldier must and will :
And when the battle was over,
In deepening gloom and shade,
He followed the Staff in silence,
And rode to the Grand Parade.

For the Tenth had another hero,
All ripe for the General's praise,
Who was called to the front that evening,
By the name of Trooper Hayes ;
He had slashed his way to fortune,
When scattered, unhorsed, alone,
And, in saving the life of a comrade,
Had managed to guard his own.

" Speak out," said the kindly Colonel,
" If you've anything, lad, to say,
Your Queen and your dear old Country
Shall hear what you've done to-day ! "
But the Trooper gnawed his chin-strap,
Then sheepishly hung his head :
" Speak out, old chap," said his comrades,
With an effort, at last, he said :

" I came to the front with my pals here,
The boys and the brave old Tars,
I've fought for my Queen and Country,
And rode with the Tenth Hussars.
I'm proud of the fine old regiment ! "—
Then the Colonel shook his hand—
" So I'll ask one single favour
From my Queen and my native land ! "

" There sits by your side on the Staff, sir,
A man we are proud to own !
He was struck down first in the battle,
But never was heard to groan :
If I've done aught to deserve it "—
The Colonel smiled " Of course ! "—
" Give back to the Tenth their Colonel—
The man on the old White Horse ! "

Then a cheer went up from his comrades,
And echoed across the sand,
And was borne on the wings of mercy
To the heart of his native land,
Where the Queen on the Throne must hear it,
And the Colonel Prince must praise
The word of a simple soldier,
Just uttered by Trooper Hayes.

Let the moralist stoop to mercy,
That balm of all souls that live :
For better than all forgetting
Is the wonderful word "Forgive !"

This sounds as if it were a "Dagonet Ballad" of George R. Sims. The real author, however, was Clement Scott.

7

The refusal to allow him to serve again in the British Army (followed, as it was, by the deaths of his wife and daughter) was a bitter blow to Valentine Baker. But he bore the disappointment as he had borne others, and took up his work afresh in Egypt.

During the next few years the Gendarmerie, which their commander had now got into good trim, found no lack of employment. There was much to occupy Baker Pasha, and his sword seldom left its sheath. In the spring of 1887 the Khalifa despatched a letter to Queen Victoria, peremptorily instructing her to "make submission and adopt the true Mahdi faith." When the letter was returned, with an intimation that such overtures could not be considered, the Khalifa busied himself in other directions, in particular at Omdurman.

Everybody makes mistakes. Still, Valentine Baker had, by his loyal and devoted service, won back his laurels and retrieved the position he had forfeited as the result of a moment's madness twelve years earlier. But it was at a heavy cost. In November 1887, worn out by wounds and ill-health and, perhaps, by disappointment—he died at Tel-el-Kebir.

Sir Evelyn Baring telegraphed the news to Lord Salisbury, and also wrote to him the next day :

CAIRO,

18 November, 1887.

"I had the honour to report to your Lordship in my telegram of the 17th inst. the sad and unexpected death of General Valentine Baker ; but I think it may not be out of place to add a few remarks on one who has held so prominent a position in Egypt during the last five years.

" . . . The Khedive and the Egyptian Government will feel the loss of this distinguished officer very severely. For my own part, I have, I may say, been in almost daily communication with General Baker since my arrival in the country. Greatly as I feel the personal loss, I consider the public loss, both to myself and indirectly to the British Government, as a still greater one.

"The benefits General Baker has conferred upon Egypt, irrespective of his distinguished services elsewhere, are of themselves sufficient to show that, by his death, a man has been lost on whose courage, ability, and judgment, not only Great Britain, but the country which he was serving at the time of his death, could confidently rely in the hour of need."

This was followed by a personal letter to the dead soldier's brother, Sir Samuel Baker :

"My despatch to Lord Salisbury very inadequately represents what I feel. During the four years that I have worked with your brother I had learnt to regard him, not only as one of my most trusted advisers on public matters, but also as one of my most valued personal friends. His loss is most deeply felt here, and by no one more than myself."

In reply Lord Salisbury wrote from the Foreign Office :

FOREIGN OFFICE,

5 December, 1887.

"The announcement of the death of General Valentine Baker Pasha was received by her Majesty's

Government with great regret. . . . It is a satisfaction to me to be able to place on record my entire concurrence in the opinions you express as to the importance and difficulties of the task which was entrusted to Baker Pasha, the high qualities he showed in surmounting those difficulties, and the devotion and fidelity with which the duties of his office were performed."

Nor were private friends lacking in their tributes to his memory.

"Valentine Baker," wrote a brother-officer, "had all the tastes and qualifications which peculiarly fit a man to distinguish himself, and to impress his influence on others. . . . Generous, brave, and kind-hearted, he left a reputation in the 10th Hussars which will not soon be forgotten."

Another old comrade, Major Arthur Griffiths, in his *Fifty Years of Public Service*, has the following :

"August (1863) found me at the Curragh, doing duty with the 10th Hussars, then commanded by one of the most promising officers in the Service. A high future might safely have been foretold for Valentine Baker, whom I remember as a quiet-mannered, rather silent man, who spoke in a soft persuasive voice when he spoke at all. He had a dark heavy face, a well-knit figure, was a fine horseman, and looked well at the head of his regiment. His soldierly qualities, his gifts of leadership, were fully proved later on under another flag, when the disastrous change in his fortunes had closed his career in the British Army, and led him to offer his sword to the Turks. History does not contain a finer or more masterly retreat than Baker's on the Schipka Pass, and he was undoubtedly a great loss to our Service."

An extract from an obituary that appeared in the *Standard* may also be given :

“As a soldier, he was one of the most dashing officers that the most brilliant department of the Army has ever produced. As a scholar and explorer, he was scarcely less distinguished than he was by his courage in the field and his sagacity in the councils of the camp.”

Three years after his death, a tablet to the memory of Valentine Baker was erected in the English Church at Cairo. The Prince of Wales served as chairman of the committee, and among its members were Lord Wolseley, Sir Redvers Buller, and Sir Henry Keppel. The wording on the tablet was as follows :

“In memory of Lieut.-General Valentine Baker Pacha, who died in Egypt, November 17, 1887, when in the service of his Highness the Khedive as Inspector-General of the Egyptian Constabulary. He commanded for many years H.M. 10th Royal Hussars, and subsequently entered the service of H.I.M. the Sultan of Turkey, in which he obtained the rank of Lieut.-General. This tablet was erected by his numerous sincere friends and admirers, as a token of respect for and appreciation of qualities of the highest order which he possessed as a soldier and commander.”

If Valentine Baker had made a slip, he had also made atonement. Full measure of it.

BIRCH AND BLOCK AT ETON

Birch and Block at Eton

I

THE advantages of what a clerical dignitary (who was himself, when a schoolmaster, renowned for wielding it with vigour) once dubbed the "wholesome bracing birch" have been sung by a poet :

Our British boys, from shore to shore,
Two priceless boons will find—
The Flag that's ever waved before,
The Birch that's waved behind !

Whatever the case now, this could certainly have been said of England's public schools in the "good old days," for the pedagogic opinion long held that the birch rod was the only effective method of driving knowledge into (and misconduct out of) small boys. It was the "system," hallowed by tradition. Eton and Westminster, where the activities of Keate and Busby have become proverbial, did not stand alone in this respect. Harrow, Rugby, and Winchester, together with every other school in the three kingdoms, all kept birch and block in constant employment.

So long ago as the year 1750 a work was published with the descriptive title, "The Opera of *Il Penseroso* ; a performance both vocal and instrumental, as it is acted with authority at the Royal Theatres of Eton and Westminster, and other parts of his Majesty's Dominions." That the volume now figures in the second-hand booksellers' catalogues among the list of *facetiae* or "curious" will be understood from the opening passage :

"The rod is a subject both interesting and important, *if properly handled*. To this the greatest men in Church

and State must (if they have honesty enough to acknowledge old friends) allow themselves greatly indebted."

Dr. Wordsworth, an ex-headmaster of Winchester, says of his predecessor, Dr. Ridding, "It was not unusual of him after morning school to castigate not less than fifty boys at a time." Dr. Gabell, too, was a staunch supporter of the Wykehamist motto, *Aut disce ; aut discede ; manet sors tertia cædi*. He once proposed spending a "solid day" with a colleague, Dr. Parr, of Norwich. "Let us meet," he suggested, "and quaff a bumper to the good cause of flogging." This friend of his, the Rev. Dr. Parr, appears to have been something of a modern Orbilius. "I never remember him," says one of his scholars, "with any instrument of correction but the rod ; and that uniformly applied where it could do the brain no harm. A peculiar expression of complacency sat upon his countenance, as if fully satisfied with the usefulness of the infliction, and resolved to do his duty in spite of vulgar clamour."

A similar Spartan code at Harrow, where a passage in his autobiography recalls the frequency of Anthony Trollope's unappreciated interviews with Dr. Butler. "He must have known me," he says, referring to an occasion when the headmaster met him out of doors and asked him his name, "had he seen me as he was wont to see me, for he was in the habit of flogging me constantly. Perhaps he did not recognise me by my face." It is also recorded of him that, when he ruled on the Hill, "the urbane Longley flogged fifty boys one morning for going to a steeplechase." It scarcely sounds "urbane."

When the learned Dr. Wooll was in command at Rugby, he was as fond of the rod as his contemporaries elsewhere. His record was to "polish off thirty-eight

delinquents in fifteen minutes." The fact that he was a man of small stature gave point to Lord Lyttelton's remark about his consulship being distinguished by "much cry and little Wooll." It was this pedagogue, by the way, who once delivered a sermon in the school chapel on "the dangerous and irresistible progress of habitual sin, as revealed by the dreadful murder of Mr. Weare." Dr. Arnold, who followed him, was more sparing of the rod. Still, he held it applicable to "bird-nesting" ; and Tom Brown, it will be remembered, made its acquaintance for fishing in forbidden waters.

A mid-Victorian guide-book refers to Eton as a "venerable and illustrious seminary, which, since the days of Henry VI, for upwards of four centuries has implanted the seeds of piety and learning in expanding the mind of youth."

That the "expanding" process was for the most part effected through the medium of the birch rod might well have been added. Yet, despite the considerable amount of it that was their portion, youthful depravity was not always stamped out among its recipients. Thus, Dr. Barnard is said to have once brought to the block a precocious son of Lord Sandwich, for having an affiliation order served on him at the instance of a Windsor shop girl. Even embryo Prime Ministers have knelt there ; and among those of them who have felt the avenging twigs was William Grenville. The charge against him was "heading a rebellion." This was a serious business, for a number of the upper boys began by breaking windows. They then pitched their books into the bosom of Father Thames ; marched out of the school in procession ; and stopped away all night. When they returned the next morning, Dr.

Foster got busy with birch and block ; and the list of those on whom he exercised reprisals included the sons of Lord Granby and Lord Harrington.

But Dr. Foster (1765-1802) was a rigid disciplinarian, and stood "no nonsense." He once, on a Sunday evening, publicly birched and then expelled a Fifth Form boy who had written an anonymous letter to a newspaper.

In the "good old days" it often happened that Etonians, many of them mere lads, who had powerful friends at Court would be gazetted to the Army while they were still struggling with their Latin grammars. But this did not absolve them from expiating breaches of discipline. "I had the honour this morning," once said Dr. Goodall, "of soundly flogging a major in His Majesty's service." On another occasion a big fellow, with an incipient moustache, who had actually received a commission and had been measured for his uniform, was found to have had "a glass too much." Although he was on the point of joining his regiment, this circumstance did not spare him, and he had first to take farewell of the block.

2

Of all the names notorious in the annals of Etonian flagellation, none has secured the niche occupied by Dr. Keate. Following Goodall in the headmastership, he ruled with an iron hand (unwrapped in anything resembling a velvet glove) for five-and-twenty years. During the whole of that period the birch was his sceptre and the block his throne, and were regarded by him as a prophylactic and the one effective method of preserving discipline and order among boys. "Flogging," says the author of *Reminiscences of Eton*

(who was there with him), "was the head and front, or perhaps I may say the head and tail, of the system in Keate's time."

Of his prowess in this respect there are innumerable stories. He is said to have established a record by bringing to the block a batch of ninety at one fell swoop ; and, under the impression that they had committed some delinquency, to have administered the rod to a number of candidates for confirmation.

"You are only adding to your offence by profanity and lying," he declared, when a victim attempted to point out the error.

Judging from an account left by "An Old Colleger" (the Rev. W. H. Tucker), familiarity with Keate's methods must have bred something very near contempt :

"The execution hour was an amusement ; and there was usually a large attendance of Fourths and Removes, with a scanty sprinkling of Lower Fifths, to see their friends under the amelioration system, and to note how they bore it. Occasionally an Upper Fifth came under the triangle, and the attendance in that case was considerably enlarged. But the ordinary system was a thorough farce, and was so treated by Keate."

It probably was. Still, Keate's disciplinary methods rather invited adverse criticism. When a culprit was to undergo the "ordeal by birch," he would harangue him on his misbehaviour. One such, charged with owning a badger, is said to have been addressed by him in this fashion :

"Wicked boy. By your conduct you have brought shame on your school and sorrow on the heads of your honoured parents. You have set a deplorable example to your comrades ; you have broken bounds ; you

have neglected your work ; you have idled your time ; you have wasted your God-given opportunities ; and—in short—I have no good opinion of a boy who possesses a badger. Go down, sir !”

“ Boys will be boys ” ; and, undeterred by their surroundings, some of them once carved their names on their seats in chapel. The next morning Dr. Keate, who disapproved of such a practice, sent for them and promptly carved their names on their own seats. He did this, however, with a birch rod.

Kinglake, the historian of the Crimean War, was at Eton under Keate, and has a classic description of him in *Eothen* :

“ Wherever, from utmost Canada to Bundelcund, there was a white-washed wall to an officer’s room, or any other apartment in which English gentlemen were forced to kick their heels, there likely enough (in the days of his reign) the head of Keate would be seen, scratched or drawn with those various degrees of skill which one observes in the representation of saints. . . . He was little more (if more at all) than five feet in height, and was not of any great girth ; but within this space was concentrated the pluck of ten battalions.”

A hundred and thirty years ago the headmastership of Eton was not a bed of roses ; and, on assuming it, Keate undoubtedly found himself in a difficult position, for, under the gentle sway of his predecessor, Dr. Goodall, discipline had been relaxed to a vanishing point. Keate was a man of very different calibre. “ He was determined,” says A. C. Benson, in his *Fasti Etonenses*, “ that the School must be reduced to order. His methods were no doubt carefully thought out and deliberately adopted. He determined that he would be obeyed ; that he would inspire the boys with awe

and personal terror. For that purpose, though by nature one of the kindest-hearted of men, he adopted a manner of offensive authoritativeness and of unvarying and almost brutal harshness in all his official dealings with boys."

James Hogg, in his *Life of Shelley*, has another description of him :

"Dr. Keate, the headmaster of Eton school, was a short, short-necked, short-legged man ; thick-set, powerful, and very active. His countenance resembled that of a bull-dog ; the expression was not less sweet and bewitching ; his eyes, nose, and especially his mouth, were exactly like that comely and engaging animal ; and so were his short, crooked legs. His iron sway was the more unpleasant and shocking, after the long, mild, Saturnian reign of Dr. Goodall. Discipline, wholesome and necessary in moderation, was carried by him to an excess ; it is reported that one morning he flogged eighty boys. Although he was rigid, coarse, and despotical, some affirm that on the whole he was not unjust, nor altogether devoid of kindness. His behaviour was accounted vulgar and ungentlemanlike ; and therefore he was particularly odious to the gentlemen of the school, especially to the refined and aristocratical Shelley."

The "executions" under Keate were apt to be wholesale. On one memorable occasion the entire Sixth and Fifth Forms were brought to the block. They had been ordered to write some Latin epigrams ; and, thinking their attempts would not be examined seriously, the majority had copied half a dozen specimens composed for them by their more gifted comrades. As luck, however, would have it, this time the individual compositions were examined, and seventy-two epigrams were found to have only six authors. When Keate's attention was directed to this masquerade in borrowed

plumes, he realised that it would be impossible to distinguish the genuine poets from the copyists. Accordingly, he resolved to deal with them all in the same fashion.

"An Old Colleger" has left on record a description of the holocaust that followed :

"It was a grand scene in the Library. It is not a large room ; but it had benches all round, and a largish oak table in the middle. The floor was covered with victims ; the benches and table with spectators ; upwards of a hundred present. The Lower boys were delighted to see their masters whipped. The masters had a sort of delight in seeing among them those who had passed through all their previous scholastic life un-whipped, and had prided themselves upon it, and jests and laughter accompanied the execution."

"It was hard for the genuine poets," says a sufferer on this occasion, "to find themselves under sentence for having done their epigrams. But five went on after five in the gentlest of fives, and the whole matter in point of fact was looked upon as a gigantic joke ; and I am very much mistaken if Keate himself did not look on it in much the same light."

Partial as he was to administering the birch rod, Keate knew when to stay his hand. An instance occurred when a couple of boys, charged with unpunctuality, said that they had been to Stoke Poges, to look at Gray's tomb. Thereupon, the doctor put the birch back in the cupboard, and expressed the wish that they themselves "would live to write as good an Elegy." As it happened, one of the pair, John Moultrie, did develop into something of a poet.

3

In an old "Guide to Eton" (still enjoying a brisk sale among unsuspecting tourists) there is a long poem, "The Block." This contains several references to its use during Dr. Keate's consulship :

He quelled Rebellion with Rod of Birch—
With Rod cut those who cut their names in Church ;
Here, here, Boys lowly knelt to Block of Wood,
Whilst, brandishing his sceptre, there he stood—
Down swept the Birch, and Boys who'd tried to shirk
Their books, resolved in future that they'd work !

"The Block" is followed by an engaging anecdote, which might now have some difficulty in passing the censorship :

THE OLD ETONIAN AND DR. KEATE

An Old Etonian once met Keate abroad,
And seized his hand ; but he was rather floored
To find the Doctor seemed to know him not.
"Doctor," quoth he, "you've flogged me oft I wot,
And yet it looks that me you've quite forgot."
"E'en now," says Keate, "I cannot guess your name,
Boys' b——s are so very much the same !"

"Eton under Dr. Keate," says Captain Gronow in his *Reminiscences*, "was conducted on a system of brutal severity which ought never to have been permitted." Still, everybody was not of this opinion. "We must not," says the anonymous author of *Etoniana*, "hold lightly the man who has flogged half the ministers, secretaries, bishops, generals, and dukes of the present century." Keate, too, had another champion in Sir Francis Doyle, who declared of him, "He had no favourites, and flogged the son of a duke and the son of a grocer with perfect impartiality."

The *entente* was not thereby upset. "If," says a *Quarterly Review* article, "he flogged the whole school often in detail, and once wholesale, he was never unpopular." Certainly, those who suffered under his regime, bore no malice ; and when he relinquished the headmastership, all Eton subscribed to present him with a handsome silver vase. The inscription on this gift declared it to be offered in recognition of "the firm, yet parental, exercise of his authority, which has conciliated the affection, while it has commanded the respect of his scholars."

On retiring to a country rectory, Keate is said to have developed into a "cheerful, good-humoured, kindly old gentleman, fond of leisurely pursuits, devoted to his children, and tenderly indulgent to his grandchildren." But the habits of a lifetime proved difficult to shake off ; and even after he had left the haunts where his authority had been unquestioned, he could not always forget that the disciplinary methods he had practised for five-and-twenty years had no longer held good. Thus, he once threatened a village hobbledohoy with the birch rod for "disrespect," and was furious when the threat was received with bucolic grins.

Keate lived to the ripe old age of seventy-nine. On his death, in 1852, any suggestion of the active part which the birch and block had played during his long regime was buried with him ; and all the obituary notices united in offering handsome tributes to his more amiable qualities. Thus, the *Annual Register* held him up to example as "the eminent former of the minds of the most intellectual and aristocratic youth of Britain" ; and a letter in the *Gentleman's Magazine* added : "He was just and fearless in the exercise of authority. A certain sternness of manner veiled in a



REV. DR. GOODE RD
"Unholder of Freedom and Justice."

slight degree, but never concealed, a kindliness of heart ; and few have ever obtained in the same position so much of the respect and affection of Eton boys and Eton men."

Altogether, it would appear that Dr. Keate was not so black as he was painted.

The subject of corporal punishment at Eton was not novel. A hundred years ago the *Edinburgh Review* discussed it with much solemnity in a long article :

" For all offences, except the most trivial," declared this authority, " whether for insubordination in or out of school, for inability to construe a lesson or to say it by heart, for being discovered out of bounds, for absence from chapel or school—in short, for any breach of the regulations of the school—every boy below the Sixth Form (whatever be his age) is punished by flogging. This operation is performed on the naked back by the headmaster himself, who is always a gentleman of great abilities and acquirements, and sometimes of high dignity in the Church. We are, however, convinced that nothing but habit, which deadens the minds of honourable men to the impropriety and indecorum of such an exhibition, could have concealed from them the inexpediency of the mode of punishment itself. . . . We hope that the impolicy and unfairness of this unseemly punishment may before long occasion its abolition, at least for a considerable part of the school."

" Hear, hear ! " doubtless exclaimed Smith-minor and his young comrades.

But the opinion of the *Edinburgh Review* fell on deaf ears ; and the birch rod continued to fall on something else, for where Keate led, his successors followed, as a matter of course. It was not for them to upset established tradition ; and Dr. Hawtrey and Dr. Goodford and

Dr. Balston and Dr. Hornby all applied the birch when (and where) they considered it advisable.

Montagu Williams, who was to become a distinguished barrister, once suffered for "impudence" during the regime of Dr. Hawtrey.

"When," he says, "any member of the Upper School was punished, the punishment took place in the headmaster's room, where the block was kept. The Sixth Form præpostor kept the key of the birch cupboard and superintended the execution. If the culprit were a friend of his, he busied himself, while Hawtrey was giving a preliminary lecture, in picking the buds off the birch. The sufferer was in the hands of two holders-down while the punishment was being inflicted, and the number of cuts was regulated by the gravity of his offence."

4

Writing perhaps from personal experience, the author of the now long-forgotten volume, *Etoniana*, has remarked: "Boys will stand flogging, and have no absurd notions of injured personal honour on that score, whatever modern theorists may hold. It is anything like interference with recognised privileges, right or wrong, which they resent as an indignity."

At Eton, as elsewhere, birch and block formed part of the "system," hallowed by long-established tradition; and (whatever the views of the victims) parents, as a class, did not object. "The squires," according to a chronicler, "wished, no doubt, to have their beefy brats coerced sharply."

Still, this was not always the case. Sometimes the "beefy brats" themselves objected to being "coerced,"

and their parents, with scant respect for tradition actually upheld them in this iconoclastic attitude.

A notable instance was one that occurred at Eton in 1856. Disentangled from the wealth of legend in which the episode has been shrouded, what happened was that the elder of two brothers, a youth named Morgan Thomas, was caught smoking. Dr. Goodford, the headmaster, considered that such a transgression could only be wiped out by an application of the birch rod. On, however, being summoned to the block, there was a hitch in the appointed programme, for the offender, pleading paternal instructions, flatly refused to submit. As a result of this contumacy, he saved his skin, but not his status as an Etonian, for Dr. Goodford promptly expelled him.

It might have been thought that the delinquent's father would have sided with the authorities in their efforts to uphold discipline. Mr. Thomas, senior, however, had other views, and on the return of his son to the family roof tree, he wrote a furious letter to Dr. Goodford. Not getting much satisfaction from him, he next addressed the governing body. As they proved equally unsympathetic, he then, adopting the normal practice of Britons with a grievance, wrote to the *Times*. Although room was not found there for his full plaint, the subject of it was accorded the dignity of a leading article :

“A correspondence,” it began, “too lengthy to be inserted in these columns, and yet not undeserving of notice, inasmuch as it relates to the discipline of our public schools, has lately taken place between the authorities at Eton and a Mr. Morgan Thomas, a gentleman holding the position of *paterfamilias*, who considers himself aggrieved by them.”

It was not difficult for the leader-writer to make a point. As a matter of fact, he made several.

“Mr. Thomas,” he observed, “had sent his offspring to be educated at Eton, with the express injunction laid upon them that, in case their conduct should at any time after a certain age (which we will assume to be 14) expose them to the well-known Spartan discipline of that school, they should refuse to submit to its infliction. No intimation, however, appears to have been given by Mr. Thomas to the headmaster of his scruples on this subject ; so that, in point of fact, Dr. Goodford was unconsciously induced to undertake the charge of scholars who, in addition to the ordinary incentives to transgress the rules of the school, were armed with the parental authority to resist the consequences of such transgressions. A more unfair position, both for master and pupil, it would be difficult to conceive.

“Well, as might have been expected, a case for the trial of this experiment at length occurred. The elder of these boys, or young men, as we suppose we must call them—seems to have been addicted to the manly indulgence of smoking, without having acquired the art of neutralising its fragrant odour. Being detected by his tutor in the commission of this malpractice, the young gentleman is duly ‘complained of’ to the headmaster, and sentenced to receive the punishment invariably awarded for this offence. To this punishment the young gentleman, in obedience to his father’s injunction (though entertaining no scruples on the subject himself), declines to submit ; and, as a necessary consequence, is required to leave the school. Hereupon ensues a somewhat tedious correspondence between Mr. Morgan Thomas and the authorities at Eton.”

Mr. Thomas rose to the bait, like a trout to the fly, and despatched another letter. He did not mince his words. The “Eton system” was, he declared,

“ignoble,” “filthy,” “beastly,” “dirty,” “reckless,” “revolting,” “degrading,” and “inefficient”—together with several other objectionable qualities. Altogether, he thought very little of it. But it was for the conclusion of his letter that he reserved his fiercest diatribes ; and he wound up by expressing a wish that “the day should arrive when some stalwart son of England, worthy of his country, may be, perchance, brought to the swishing-block, and may then and there inflict so sound a thrashing on the expectant *bourreau* as will leave that functionary no desire to attempt a similar outrage upon others.”

After all this, a prophetic vision was only to be expected. Mr. Thomas supplied it. “The laurels of Harmodius and Aristogeiton,” he added, “will turn pale before the halo which will encircle a greater hero than William Tell.”

5

The wrath of Mr. Thomas eclipsed his logic. He was, of course, fully justified in objecting to the birch rod as a method of disciplining erring youth. But, this being so, he should not have deliberately sent his progeny to a school where that “corrective” was known to be employed. Such an attitude was unreasonable, and furnished Printing-house Square with fresh ammunition for his discomfiture.

“He has no right,” continued the *Times*, “to send his boys to Eton with a secret proviso that they will not submit to the system of discipline there enforced, and then to complain when, under such circumstances, they are summarily dismissed. Be the system right or wrong, it cannot be changed to suit the caprices of a single parent ; and both in the mode which he adopted for testing it, and in the

remedy which he prescribes for its abolition, Mr. Thomas appears to us to have been guilty of extreme bad taste."

But the *Times* leader-writer was not a whole-hearted champion of "the discipline of the rod, as practised in our public schools." Accordingly, he declared :

"No one will affirm it to be a suitable punishment for lads of 18, or to be such as they ought, under any other circumstances and in any other position, voluntarily to submit to. So far, we agree with Mr. Thomas."

But the agreement stopped short at this point, and the rest of the article strongly traversed the views which that individual had advanced. Thus, the editorial "We" continued :

"As to the alleged indecency and degradation of such exhibitions as those referred to, we are greatly mistaken if 99 out of 100 Etonians would not pronounce it to be downright nonsense ; and yet we never heard it alleged that gentlemen who had been educated at that school were more deficient in self-respect and less governed by a sense of honour than others who had not smarted under the same rough discipline."

The next step adopted by Mr. Morgan Thomas was to announce that he had "resumed by deed poll his ancient patronymic of Morgan Treherne." He also resumed his letter-writing proclivities, and despatched another pompous communication, marked by a touch that was obviously intended for sarcasm. But this was not a weapon which he knew how to handle.

"SIR,

" ' One Mr. Morgan Thomas,' who a few days since advertised in your paper that he had ' re-assumed his ancient family name of Treherne, in lieu of his

hitherto accustomed patronymic,' should deeply feel the honour done him by a leading article in the *Times* upon his 'common sense' or his 'extreme bad taste.' I, therefore, representing this unity, beg duly to acknowledge the compliment, and trust to your sense of justice to inform the public in your widely-spread columns that I have survived the thunderbolt.

"You will see by the printed correspondence on 'Adult Flogging' which I took the liberty of sending to your office that I am not partial to the *Times* : and the 'extremely bad taste' which you have now displayed in personally attacking me, instead of the point in question, so characterises such notices in that journal that its admirable development of talent fails to procure for it that respect which is otherwise its due."

Having thus cleared the ground, as it were, Mr. Treherne (as he had now become) developed his position and busied himself with discussing "the propriety of the course I have taken and the truth I have spoken." This course required a solid column.

"When," he began, "my sons first went to be 'educated at Eton,' I laid no injunction upon either of them that he should not submit to what you pleasantly term 'Spartan discipline'; and both of them have yielded (frequently, I believe) to its 'well-known characteristic.' I never encouraged either of my sons to 'transgress the rules of the school,' either by thought, word, or deed. I have more 'common sense' and proper feeling, I hope, than to be guilty of such a breach of duty, either to my children or their 'governors, spiritual pastors, and masters.' I discountenance smoking, because it was very properly forbidden at Eton, and because I admit it (though myself a smoker) to be a dirty habit.

"You may call my view of adult flogging a 'caprice,' or endeavour to annihilate it by a sneer, but the main question remains unanswered—is it right or wrong?

"I have complained of the style of your 'leader'

because it was, on the face of it, a tirade against an individual who did 'not like the *Times*,' rather than an argument against what he had advanced. 'The Devil can quote Scripture for his purpose'; and it is in the power of anyone of even mediocre talents to create a prejudice by stringing together a list of epithets without their application. The Bible itself is not safe from a Thersites. Had you published the 'somewhat tedious correspondence' from which you raked these adjectives, I should not have had the right to reprobate the course you have taken as ungenerous and unfair. Had you ranged them alphabetically, they might have been of some use as a dictionary; 'as they are lugged in pell-mell, they are only a damage to yourself.

"I repudiate and altogether protest against the personal view you wish to impose upon a most important question. As far as I and the 'hero of this tale' are concerned, he has been prevented by the somewhat disproportioned punishment for 'smelling of smoke and refusing to take a flogging' (in itself most uncalled for by so trivial a sin) from 'keeping the wall' this half! My other son I have removed without putting Dr. Goodford under the 'most unfair position' of being obliged to apply the alternative of 'disgrace' and 'insult.'

"I shall expect you to insert this letter (though longer than I could have wished to trouble you with) in your Tuesday's paper, if you have any sense of fair play and justice. And I take this opportunity of informing you, and the public through you, that I shall decline in future any reply to anonymous attacks, although I am quite prepared to defend the position I have assumed if questioned by anyone who, openly and in his own proper name, desires to be distinguished as the advocate of that which is 'degrading' and 'revolting' to human nature and civilisation!"

This drew a sharp rejoinder, in the form of a second leading article :

“ Mr. Morgan Treherne, *ci-devant* Thomas, complains that in our remarks upon his published correspondence with the authorities of Eton we personally attacked him, instead of the point in question. This is simply an untruth, as anybody can see by simply referring to the article. Nearly the whole of it was addressed to the question at issue, as directly as if there was no ‘ Thomas ’ or ‘ Treherne ’ in the world ; and the exception consisted of a string of epithets selected from that gentleman’s own letter, and a splendid bit of fustian from the same pen about Harmodius, Aristogeiton, and William Tell. Mr. Morgan Treherne’s explanation of this misstatement we are not likely to hear, as he has prudently announced his intention to retire from the controversy he has raised.

“ The moderation of our language has been lost on Mr. Treherne, who evidently does not know the class of faults usually hinted at by an appeal to good taste. It is our duty to enlighten him on this point by explaining that it is usual for gentlemen dealing with gentlemen to do everything above board, and to hold themselves bound by all the understood conditions of the matter between them. In the nature of things it is quite impossible to be always exchanging written stipulations signed by both parties ; and certainly masters, parents, and sons never proceed by the mode of written contracts. The common understanding, then, becomes law ; and it is a breach of good faith, a downright dishonesty for a parent and son to have a private understanding to violate the public understanding between them and the authorities of the school. As Mr. Treherne objects to this being called bad taste, we will confess that to be a very inadequate expression. Such conduct is worse than bad taste—it is dishonourable.

“ In our own opinion it is almost superfluous to discuss the question with a man who starts with the avowal that he has secretly plotted with his own sons against the discipline and authorities of the school.

How can such a person know what degrades a man, and what does not? Thousands of gentlemen have been flogged, and never felt a taint on their honour ; nor has their subsequent career shown either want of high feeling or of a sense of degradation. Ministers of State, ere this, have not only held up their heads in the presence of the old master who had flogged them, but even volunteered pleasantries on the subject. We believe there are living instances of schoolmasters receiving high promotion from the men who had felt the weight of their arm, or rather the sting of their rod.

“ A very large proportion of the British aristocracy has passed through the ordeal of the birch ; and, though they do not claim a monopoly of honourable sentiment, yet they may at least be compared advantageously with other classes, and even with other aristocracies. There is one thing at least which few of them will do, even though they have endured this ‘ filthy ’ and ‘ revolting ’ indignity. They will not meet one another face to face, shake hands and communicate on terms of mutual confidence, being all the time conscious of a conspiracy to break a known understanding between them. They would rather be flogged than do this. No doubt, all this is very mysterious to Mr. Treherne ; so we will just beg him, now that he has shuffled off his vulgar ‘ Mr. Thomas,’ to acquire the feelings proper to his newly-assumed and duly-advertised patronymic.”

Any sympathy the *Times* had felt was soon exhausted. Its next reference was merely a brief paragraph :

“ We have received another long letter from Mr. Treherne, *ci-devant* Morgan Thomas, about flogging at Eton, and containing even a greater amount of fustian and bombast than we thought it in the power of this long-winded Cambro Briton to compress into a single sheet. In his last letter Mr. Treherne declared it to be his intention not to continue

his correspondence with us. 'I shall decline in future any reply to anonymous attacks,' were the words in which he announced his retirement from the controversy ; and we must beg leave to hold him to his engagement. He must seek redress for his grievances in some other quarter."

6

So far as the columns of the *Times* were concerned, Mr. Treherne took the hint. But the correspondence had attracted attention elsewhere ; and, in an article on "The Groans of Britons," the *Saturday Review* had a rap for him :

"Sometimes the complaints which a bold Briton pours into the sympathising bosom of his newspaper are the most serious illustration of the intense and disinterested affection which an Englishman feels for himself. That he, the heir of all ages in the foremost files of time, should be uncomfortable, strikes him not so much in the light of a personal wrong as in that of a blot on the face of creation.

" . . . The most wonderful man of all is the gentleman who sent his sons to Eton because he objected to flogging, in order, apparently, to have a chance of getting into a controversy with Dr. Goodford. If he had lived in the days of Moloch, he would probably have made his children pass through the fire for the sake of entitling himself to expose the system in the columns of the *Jerusalem Gazette* or the *Samaritan News*. What must be the patriotism of a man who exposes his sons to what he considers a filthy and degrading punishment, in order that he may, through the columns of a newspaper, incite the classic youth of Eton to follow the examples of Harmodius and Aristogeiton ? Perhaps his own heroic progeny will adopt the rôle, and sharpen their penknives."

Several "fine old English gentlemen" promptly rushed into the breach and aired their views. "What was good enough for their fathers was good enough for them," etc.; and a letter on the subject, obviously written by a thick-and-thin admirer of Etonian customs, appeared in the *Morning Post* :

"SIR,

"Your contemporary, the *Times*, has lately made a leading article out of the 'Flogging at Eton.' He has *complained* of and tickled up finely that father who would everlastingly be appealing to the honour of the boys. Let us hope the father will never repent the course which he has adopted. I knew a fond mother who, relative to this subject, exclaimed: 'It is quite shocking. Why does not the Doctor *talk* to the boys?' *Talk* to 600 boys!

"Now, I can vouch that, from the earliest ages to the days of the immortal Keate, and thence to those of the present headmaster, they have, one and all, appealed to the *very seat of honour*. 'Experientia docet.' And, mark me, flogging, used with sound judgment, is the only *fundamental* principle upon which our large schools can be properly conducted.

"I am all the better for it, and am, therefore—ONE WHO HAS BEEN WELL SWISHED."

Readers of *Punch* were promptly offered a vigorous comment on this effusion :

"Is the old dunce who perpetrated the attempts at joking contained in the foregoing stuff, and underlined them to indicate that they were meant for jokes—is such an obsolete blockhead all the better for having been flogged? Could a worse booby exist? Can he have been a greater fool before he was flogged than he is now that he has been flogged? Is he not plainly incorrigible? If he were not, we should recommend him to get himself corrected by submitting once more to the degrading infliction

which he advocates with such gusto, and the idea of which is so disgusting to everybody else that can be disgusted by anything. We speak with reference to young men—leaving children out of the question—considered as the subjects of Eton discipline.

“There is a cant of manly roughness, as well as a cant of maudlin sentimentality. Both are sentimental affections. As there are maudlin sentimentalists who think it interesting and pretty to pet convicted criminals, so there are manly sentimentalists who consider it fine and stern and bluff and old English to stand up for the shameful flagellation of lads who in law only are not young men. When we find a manly sentimentalist advocating the rod, we generally discover that he has been at a public school; and we see pretty clearly that his eulogy of flogging proceeds from an opinion that it has made an exceedingly fine and clever fellow of himself; an opinion sometimes very erroneous.”

Mr. Treherne also found a champion in another quarter. This was “the very talented editor of the *Coventry Herald*, who published some apt remarks in support of him” :

“It is wonderful that the high spirit and honour of England can be maintained throughout the world by youths who, only a few months before, have submitted to be birched! We should imagine that all sense of honour and self-respect would vanish for ever under the infliction, and that a boy of any spirit would die rather than submit to it.”

But “spirit” appears to have been lacking, for there is no record of any deaths on this account.

Naturally enough, interest at Eton in Mr. Treherne’s brush with Dr. Goodford ran to fever heat. But there was not much sympathy expended on behalf of the “victim.”

"A great deal of excitement took place," says a contemporary, "especially among the lower boys, on account of a boy refusing to be flogged. The boy in question was known as 'Fat' T——, in contradistinction to another T——, who was designated 'Black' T——. Not that the former was by any means particularly fat, although he was a big, strong boy. One day he was caught smoking; and, according to the rules and regulations, was promptly complained of. When the time came for the expiation of his crime, by undoing his braces, etc., he stoutly refused to obey orders. There was a lot of unnecessary fuss made about it, his father taking his part, and writing to the *Times* in defence of his conduct. A long public controversy took place, which the lower boys read with great gusto, some hoping it might be conducive to the abolition of swishing."

This, however—much to the chagrin of Smith-minor and his young friends—was not to be; and Dr. Goodford, with the full approval of the governing body, kept the birch rod on the active list. Whatever, too, he thought about it, the elder Master Morgan seems to have profited by his uncomfortable quarter of an hour, as it so far stimulated his mental faculties that he won the Prince Consort's prize for Italian.

Like father, like daughter. Mrs. Georgina Weldon, who was to distinguish herself as a litigant and to secure considerable notoriety by pleading her own cause in a number of actions which she launched against public men, was a daughter of Mr. Morgan Treherne. Being gifted with marked forensic ability, she had many successes in the courts. Still, she also had her failures; and, as a result of libelling an impresario with whom she had quarrelled, she twice found herself in prison.

7

At Eton the appointed place of execution was the Library, "that scene of terror and punishment, where, as if in mockery of the culprits below, have been affixed the figures of festive maidens and triumphant heroes." The most conspicuous article there was the historic block, its steps and surface well polished with the knees and elbows of the countless Etonians who had made its enforced acquaintance. Adjoining this, was a cupboard in which reposed a supply of birches, prepared by the headmaster's butler, "assisted by his affectionate spouse." As—if only from attrition—the same rod could not be used more than once, the couple were kept busy.

During the consulship of Dr. Goodford (1853–1862) the bluest blood in England may be said to have stained the Library carpet ; and the twigs of the avenging rod fell on patrician cuticles just as surely as they did on those of plebeian origin.

An instance of this impartiality was afforded by the experience of a Lower boy who happened to be the heir to a dukedom. One afternoon his fond mother visited Eton and was permitted to take her offspring back to the ancestral mansion for a brief respite from his studies. While waiting on the Windsor platform until the train arrived, the lad, selecting the tempting target offered by a porter's back, amused himself with a catapult. A shocked master, who happened to be there (and to whom the victim complained) stepped up and informed the duchess that, before beginning his holiday, her young hopeful must return with him and suffer the prescribed penalty for using a forbidden weapon. Her Grace offered no objection, and

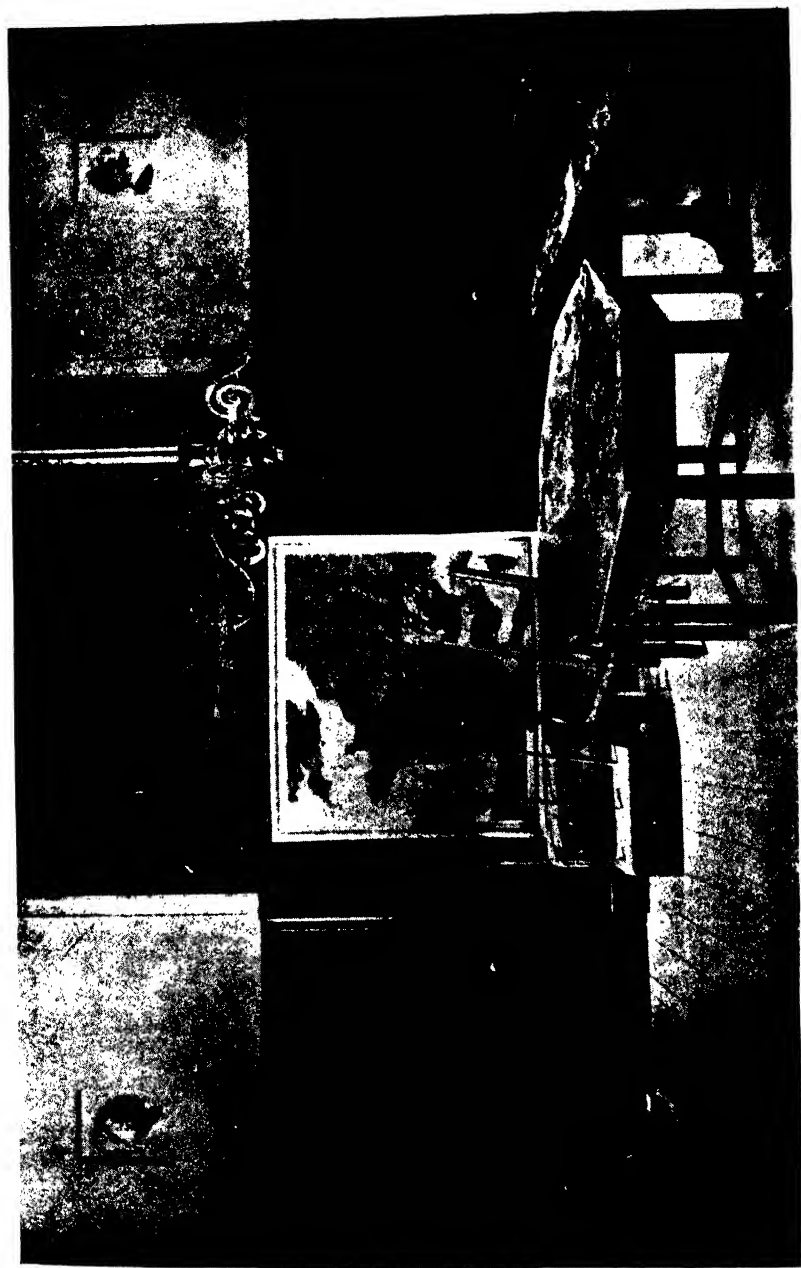
announced that she would spend the interval having a cup of tea in an adjoining hotel. Thereupon, the culprit and his escort hurried off in a cab. Although it was after hours when they arrived at the College, Dr. Goodford was obliging enough to requisition birch and block without delay.

"Give my compliments to the duchess," he said blandly, as, the interview completed, a second cab was summoned, and the embryo duke departed, tingling, but relieved, to rejoin his mother.

Dr. Goodford never bore malice ; and, after wielding the rod with vigour, he would greet his victim in affable fashion the next time they met. He once invited to breakfast a young sprig of nobility whom, a quarter of an hour earlier, he had encountered at the block.

"Well, Tompkins, my lad," he remarked genially, as his guest presented himself, "so here we are again !"

The choice was sometimes offered between submission to the block and summary expulsion. There is a story of a delinquent who chose the latter alternative, and then changed his mind. On returning to Eton, however, he discovered that Dr. Goodford had gone off to Switzerland on a holiday. Packing up a birch rod in his portmanteau, he hurried after the pedagogue. But, having reached Geneva, he found that his quarry had left for Lucerne ; and when he got to Lucerne, the Doctor was somewhere else. Still, by dint of patient enquiries, he eventually stumbled upon him at the Hospice of St. Bernard. There, the tale of his perseverance and anxiety to expiate his misconduct so touched Dr. Goodford that "he administered a sound flogging amidst an edified circle of monks, and then presented his visitor with a copy of *Rambles among the Alps* as a farewell gift."



Hills and Saunders, Eton

HEADMASTER'S ROOM AT ETON

Where "blue blood has stained the carpet"

This legend (and it is little else) has been served up in doggerel verse.

But, whether holiday-making or not, Dr. Goodford was always ready to oblige. It is said of him that, at the end of a half, he would give up his scanty leisure to "officiating with the birch on a Sunday evening, to meet the convenience of those who had to catch an early train the next morning."

In *Recollections of Eton* an "Old Etonian" has given a personal account of what was implied by being under the rod in Dr. Balston's day. The offence for which he suffered was that of gambling at Windsor Fair :

"Besides the Doctor, there were in the room the Sixth Form præpostor and the two junior Collegers of the Fifth Form who were to act as satellites or assistant-torturers in the work that was to come. The block itself I had seen before ; but never in such prominence as it was to-day, drawn out towards the middle of the room, waiting almost in expectancy for its victims. No one who saw it in its present position, and with the ministers of justice around it, could mistake the purpose of the two wooden steps. A vision must almost involuntarily have arisen of kneeling criminals presenting their backs to the smiter, which would decidedly condemn the erroneous opinions of those who, before now, have imagined it to be an article of bedside utility.

" . . . I was resolved that no cry should escape me ; and, for the sake of my own glory among my schoolfellows, intended to suffer as a hero. But the difficulty of repressing my feelings I found to be in reality by no means so hard as I had anticipated. The first cut, indeed, stung me a little, but after this the sensation seemed deadened ; and before the six were finished, I had made up my mind that there was nothing very terrible in a flogging."

The bull-dog breed !

When he afterwards exhibited his wounds to a select gathering, the victim met with sympathetic comments :

“ You’ll be like a plum-pudding behind for the next fortnight,” declared an expert. “ Still, as it’s not the bathing season, nobody will chaff you about it.”

With the idea of lessening the sting of the rod (or perhaps of softening the heart of its wielder), erring youths have been known to adopt curious expedients. Thus, a small boy once anointed a portion of his anatomy with a mixture which a Windsor chemist, taking advantage of his ignorance, had said would toughen it. All it did, however, was to turn it a jet-black. A second delinquent invoked the help of an artistic comrade to decorate the appropriate surface with a recognisable likeness of the executioner. This did prove effective, for when he saw his features staring up at him from such an unconventional background, the just wrath of the Head was appeased.

Henry Salt, writing of Eton during the consulship of Dr. Hornby, has, in his *Seventy Years among Savages*, some apposite remarks on the subject :

“ No one who has any knowledge of the history of corporal punishment will be surprised to hear that he was a frequent wielder of the rod. Seldom did a day pass without a visit from the Six Form præpostor to one or more of the Divisions, to bid some culprit ‘ stay after school ’ ; and on those occasions the conduct of the class was a good indication of the light in which the punishment was regarded.

“ As the fatal hour approached, the eyes of all would be riveted on the offender, who maintained a dauntless demeanour to the last ; pantomimic gestures

would indicate the nature of the penalty which he was shortly to undergo ; watches would be held up to emphasise the dreadful fact that time was on the wing ; and there would be audible surmises as to ' how many ' he would get. The victim's friends, indeed, were hardly so considerate and sympathetic as the circumstances might have been expected to demand."

Where the more juvenile delinquents were concerned, the duty, or privilege, of administering the rod was entrusted to the Lower Master. When the Rev. Mr. Durnford held this post he would impart an air of cheery bonhomie into the operation, by carrying on a conversation with his victim. " He was once," says a colleague, " overheard to enquire of a boy on the block, ' Have you seen your uncle lately ? ' a question which would, at first sight, seem irrelevant, but was probably intended to awaken repentance in the criminal by directing his thoughts to some pious and respected relative."

Another Lower Master had a habit of punctuating each stroke with critical comments. Thus, once when he was " operating " on a boy who had been discovered in a public-house, he addressed him in this fashion :

" It is shocking for a boy to get drunk—(swish)—particularly at night—(swish, swish)—and you, the nephew of a lord ! "—(swish, swish, swish).

It is not everybody who has submitted to Etonian " discipline " without demur. Thus, a youthful Marquess of Ailesbury once ran away from the College, rather than sacrifice his cuticle. However, he was sent back the next morning by his unsympathetic parents, and duly appeared on the block. While there, he is said to have protested in such vigorous language that the angry pedagogue finished up by expelling him.

8

A bard who is properly up to his work is seldom at a loss for a subject. One of them has even been delivered of the following effort :

There was the awful block of wood
In Eton's old li-brary,
Whereon was execution done
If boys turned out con-trary.

Not quite the best poetry, perhaps ; still, an accurate enough presentment of this article's functions.

Although nothing but a roughly carpentered piece of wood, the Eton block has made history. Considering, too, its grim associations, it is not astonishing that it has roused unfriendly feelings in certain youthful breasts. More than once, there has even been a "rape of the block." The first of the series occurred during the "Rebellion" of 1783. Having driven the headmaster into the Provost's lodge, the malcontents betook themselves to the Library, and destroyed the object of their wrath with red-hot pokers. A fragment, however, was carried off, and "chips of the old block" were distributed as souvenirs among the ring-leaders.

But the authorities, while indignant at such sacrilege, were not seriously inconvenienced, for an effective substitute was promptly provided. This fulfilled its appointed purpose for upwards of half a century. Its days, however, were then numbered. On a memorable May evening in 1836 three Old Etonians—the Marquess of Waterford, Lord Alford, and Mr. Henry Jesse—revisiting Henry's Holy Shade, crept through a window, lowered the grim relic into a waiting carriage, and returned to London with the prized trophy. There it served as the official chair of the President of the Eton

Block Club, membership of which select coterie was limited to those who had undergone the "ordeal by birch" on not less than three occasions.

Within more recent years the block was abducted by a couple of daring spirits and smuggled up to London in a car. Not knowing how to get rid of their prize, and anxious to avoid having it found in their possession when the hue and cry should be raised, the purloiners actually offered it to the British Museum. But, much to their annoyance, the trustees of the national treasures declined to accept it. The ravishers would probably have had better luck if they had approached Madame Tussaud's. Being, however, unaware of the existence of this market, they sent it back anonymously to Eton.

A second block, kept in the Lower School, has also had its misadventures. During the late 'sixties it was abstracted by a young desperado and accompanied him to Oxford. It was not restored to the authorities until 1890.

Eton customs linger. But they do not linger indefinitely; and, with the passage of time, many that were once held in high honour have disappeared. "The only old custom left," says the author of the *Annals of Eton College*, "seems to be the ceremony on the appointment of a new Head Master or Lower Master. The custom, probably dating from early times, is for the Captain of the School to present the newly appointed Master with a birch tied up with blue ribbons; and formerly the Captain got a guinea, wrapped up in cream-laid paper, for his pains. In 1884, on the appointment of the present Head Master (Dr. Warre) the birch was duly presented, but the Captain did not receive the traditional honorarium."

Dr. Warre, who ruled at Eton from 1884 to 1905,

was no thick-and-thin advocate of the birch rod ; and under his regime its employment is said to have “ greatly diminished.” Still, there was an appreciable amount of it, as his diary records an average of forty-seven inflictions during each of the first few years that he held sway. But, judging from the account of an assistant-master, they seem to have been somewhat farcical, being “ awful in ceremonial and innocuous in action. The Head lifted the birch about a foot, let it fall gently three times, and all was over.”

Writing of Eton in 1898, an authority says : “ Nowadays flogging is rare ; yet not so very long ago the key of the birch cupboard was not an unmeaning symbol of office.” But it is brought out on occasions ; and trippers of both sexes, being shown over the school during the holidays, still have the birch and block exhibited to them as one of the “ sights.” The College servant to whom this task used to be entrusted would enter into harrowing details, finishing up with the grim announcement, “ They get it on their seats, ladies.”

“BLOOMERISM” IN BRITAIN

“Bloomerism” in Britain

I

IT is not given to everyone to add a definition to the dictionary. This distinction, however, can be credited to the lady whose fame has gone ringing down the grooves of time as the inventor of “bloomers,” the feminine garment with which, even after an interval of eighty years, her name is still associated. She also attracted the music-hall laureates of the mid-Victorian era, for a popular song declared of her :

Mrs. Bloomer, pure and bright,
Wears Turkish trousers day and night !

The poetry, so far as went its rhythm and scansion, was fair to middling ; but its accuracy—like so much that was written of Mrs. Bloomer—was unfounded.

An American by birth, Amelia Jenks, the future Mrs. Bloomer, was the daughter of a man saddled with the oddly chosen Christian name of Ananias. On her marriage to Henry Dexter Bloomer, she conducted a temperance journal called *The Lily*. It was in the columns of this organ that, somewhere about the year 1848, she first turned her attention to the subject of “dress reform.” She began in a small way, and with very minor departures from the accepted standard. Gradually, these were elaborated ; and in 1851 she evolved what, to her thinking, was a “light, attractive, and elegant style, for the cumbrous, ugly, and inconvenient one to which women were condemned by the tyranny of fashion.”

“We would,” wrote Mrs. Bloomer in an editorial, “have a skirt reaching to half-way between the knee and the ankle ; under this there should be trousers, cut moderately full and gathered in above the footwear, which should be fancifully embroidered at

the upper edge." Further details (and paper patterns) followed. Thus : " The walking-dress consists of a figured silk bodice, purple and white in colour, with muslin wristlets, and a skirt ending six inches below the knees ; trousers of the same material as the bodice, just covering the tops of the gaiters, and gathered in with a pretty two-inch ruffle ; boots of black prunella, with elastic sides ; and a straw hat or bonnet, with four-and-a-half inch brim, lined with coloured silk and set off with ribbon and tassels."

Altogether, quite a dainty *confection*.

Mrs. Bloomer was not alone in advocating the " new mode," for staunch support was given by a Mrs. Smith, who delivered a public lecture on the subject. Declaring that " woman was by nature the creature of sunshine," she urged that there should be " no bowing to mere convention or rigid adherence to the feminine fashions adopted at profligate courts in Europe." These circles, she considered, " had things too much their own way ; and that her countrywomen, as Daughters of the Republic, should snap their fingers at the sneers of the Press." After this, it is not surprising to read that " Madam was loudly applauded."

Ready to practise what she preached, and thus set an example, Mrs. Bloomer herself adopted the " new costume, of a short skirt and black satin trousers." The result was not entirely encouraging, for " some praised, some blamed, and some ridiculed ; and ' Bloomerism ' was the heading of many a vulgar squib." Mere prejudice, perhaps, but, while Madam's pioneer spirit was freely acknowledged, American women, as a class, were callously oblivious to the advantages she offered them. " They did not know what was good for them," said the inventor. Disappointments also had to be registered. One such



MRS. AMELIA BLOOMER
Of "Trousers for Women" fame

came from a Mrs. Stanton. This lady began well, and braved public opinion by wearing “bloomers” at dinner-parties. But she was not of the stuff that endures, for “after a time, the pressure brought by her family was so strong that she yielded to their wishes and returned to long skirts.”

A set-back was also chronicled at Providence, for when she appeared there in “Bloomer costume,” a Miss Johnson was arrested by a zealous policeman. On the grounds that the mode “resembled male attire,” a local magistrate fined her twenty dollars.

But that this prejudice did not extend everywhere is clear from a paragraph in a Nashville paper :

“On Monday last our city was honoured by the presence among us of three of Alabama’s fairest daughters, each magnificently attired in full Bloomer costume. As may be imagined they created quite a sensation. In fact, we never saw our town so stirred. It was perhaps Miss Julia Mortimer who attracted most attention. Her dress consisted of a scarlet bodice and costly barège skirt, above white cambric pantalettes, tipped with lace and fastened at the ankles with coloured ribands. The charms of Miss Alice Gray, who wore a rich purple bodice, with pink satin skirt and trousers, were also exhibited with considerable effect. The third member of the trio, Miss Dora de Kalb, adopted a green scarf, crimson bodice, and white satin skirt and ‘continuations’; and her swelling bosom was adorned with a diamond breastpin. This young lady’s unaffected modesty of demeanour, coupled with her intelligent expression, will always win her a host of admirers wherever she appears.”

Another town to welcome “Bloomerism” was Syracuse, where “an anti-slavery convocation was attended by Mrs. Burleigh and the two Misses Burleigh, the

attractive wife and daughters of the poet Burleigh. They all appeared in the new costume, with loose trousers, reaching to the ankles, and gypsy straw hats. Every eye was immediately directed upon the ladies, who walked in calm and leisurely fashion to the chairs reserved for them on the platform."

With a view to meeting hostile criticism, Mrs. Bloomer wrote a letter to the *New York Post* :

"Those who consider that we look 'queer' would do well to glance back a few years, to the time when there were 10 or 15 lbs. of petticoat and bustle round the body and balloons on the arms, and then think who cut the queerest figures—they or we. As for us, we care not for the frowns of over-fastidious gentlemen ; we are sustained by the opinions of those of better taste and less questionable morals. If gentlemen really think they would be comfortable in long, heavy skirts, well, let them wear them. We have no objection. We do not say that we shall wear this costume, and no other ; but we shall certainly adopt it for a common dress. We hope it may become so fashionable that we shall wear it at all times and in all places, without being thought singular."

That, however, Mrs. Bloomer had some qualms as to the reception awaiting her effort is clear from a confidence in the columns of *The Lily* : "We trust," she confided to its pages, "that our lady readers will not be shocked at our 'masculine' appearance, or that their gentlemen friends will not mistake us as belonging to their own sex."

But any qualms she might have had on the subject were soon dispelled by an editorial pronouncement in a Boston organ :

"Wherever she appears in public," remarked this authority, "Mrs. Bloomer portrays that real elegance of breeding so admired in our best ladies. Vulgar

winks and jeers have no effect upon her. Should she by chance encounter low-minded persons who express uncomplimentary opinions, she neither drops her head in shame and pouts her lips, nor turns upon her heel with a cold look of contempt. Instead, she just walks past them, her countenance indicative of purity and happiness, and her thoughts filled with the goodness and wisdom of an all-wise Providence.”

Other organs were similarly encouraging. “We look forward with pleasure,” said the *Washington Telegram*, “to the day on which every well-dressed lady, here and elsewhere, will adopt this sensible costume”; and the *Hertford Times* added: “A fog of prejudice must be dissipated. It will, however, vanish, should our fair ones so decide.”

But the “fog of prejudice” was not dissipated. The fact was, trousers, as a garb for women, were a good deal to swallow. Considerable opposition met them. Still, when challenged as to their propriety, their advocate had an answer:

“If,” she remarked, in the course of a lecture (delivered, appropriately enough, at Knickerbocker Hall), “feminine delicacy requires that the skirt should be long, why are our best ladies allowed to lift it a dozen times a day when out walking? Surely, a few spots of mud on the hem are as nothing compared with the charge of indelicacy to which such an exhibition might well subject them!”

While the argument was a good one, it was not good enough. Her countrywomen, as a class, offered such a cold welcome to the “new costume” that its inventor decided to see if the old world would be more responsive. In the autumn of 1851, accordingly, a “bevy of trained representatives crossed the Atlantic, to effect the introduction of Bloomerism into Britain.”

The missionaries set to work early. In fact, the moment they arrived in London.

“For several days past,” announced an astonished reporter, “the inhabitants of the fashionable Brompton district have witnessed the daring spectacle of three young and attractive ladies walking about among them in full Bloomer attire. The dress consists of a velvet coatee, buttoning tight at the waist, affording a glimpse of a frilled shirt front, with skirt descending to just above the knee. The trousers are cut full and drawn close to the ankle. On Wednesday this odd costume was also to be observed in the West-end, for two ladies, in jackets and short petticoats, dark silk trousers, with cashmere footwear and bonnets, appeared in Piccadilly and St. James’s Square. As may be imagined, they attracted considerable curiosity, coupled with inquisitive stares. During the course of their walk, they distributed handbills among the passers-by, addressed to ‘Mothers, Wives, and Daughters of England,’ and left some at milliners’ shops, etc.”

It was not long before the visitors became even more adventurous :

“On Sunday, September 15,” says a weekly paper, “much amusement was occasioned to the crowd of fashionables strolling in St. James’s Park by the sudden and unexpected arrival among them of a complete batch of ‘Bloomers.’ The party consisted of five females (two of them being Frenchwomen) and two males. All the ladies, with the exception of the Frenchwomen, were dressed alike. These latter wore blue trousers, while our own countrywomen had pink. . . . The new style of dress did not appear agreeable to the mob, for the ‘Bloomers’ had scarcely arrived on the scene when they were

assailed with an unlimited quantity of coarse jokes, mingled with distinct threats of ducking them in the nearest pond. As a result, they beat a prompt retreat into Waterloo Place, where the ladies entered a carriage that was waiting for them, and the ‘gents’ walked off in ungallant fashion.”

Another item culled from the gossip columns of an evening journal records fresh daring :

“A party of ladies in Bloomer attire made their appearance among the crowds at the Great Exhibition on Friday last. The novel and unfeminine costume attracted, as may be imagined, no small share of public interest ; and in a very short time the fair wearers found it convenient to call a cab. They appeared to be persons of some social position, and bore without demur the taunts and protests directed against them. It is understood that two of the party were members of a hitherto respectable family residing in Islington.”

Resolved to spread their doctrines over as extended a field as possible, some of the crusaders next visited Ireland and Scotland. The reception accorded them in Ireland was far from encouraging.

“Three ladies—apparently mother and daughters,” says a Belfast paper, “were observed on Sunday afternoon wearing full Bloomer costume on the public promenade. Those who had not yet heard of this novel American fashion did not know what to make of the singular and theatrical-looking combination which was unblushingly paraded before them in a manner as unfeminine as the style itself. Others of our citizens did not hesitate to express an opinion the reverse of complimentary to the rank and character of the wearers ; and they readily identified them with those women whose pronounced gaiety of demeanour inevitably stamps the class to which they belong.”

Nor did better luck attend them in Scotland.

"The utmost astonishment," said an Edinburgh journalist, "was occasioned among us last Wednesday by the remarkable apparition of two so-called ladies wearing 'Bloomer' garb on the Dean Bridge. Their 'continuations' reached to the instep, but their bonnets were like those of more decorously clad members of the feminine sex. The singular spectacle attracted considerable attention even in the retired quarter of the town where it was exhibited. From enquiries on the subject, we learn that the ladies have come from America. We trust it will not be long before they return there. The style is certainly not wanted in Edinburgh."

A more sympathetic note was struck by a second Edinburgh paper: "If," pointed out this critic, "our ultra-prim and precise ladies consider it proper to exhibit their shoulders when in evening-dress, they should not object to a few inches of their ankles being visible when they are out walking."

All this, however, was merely a preliminary. The real business of the visitors was to conquer London. To this end a public address on the "Bloomer Costume" was advertised to be delivered by a Mrs. Dexter at the British Institution, Finsbury, on September 29. The charge for admission ranged from threepence to a shilling; and the hall, which held 1200, was crammed to the doors by an expectant mob.

Something, however, had gone wrong, for no speaker arrived. The audience became impatient. Then they became noisy. "Jokes and witticisms," says a journalist, "were bandied about freely, and some very vulgar remarks at the expense of the 'Bloomers' were made by the men in the back rows. Presently, one of the vergers of St. Paul's appeared and took a seat on the

platform, and was ironically cheered. ‘If Madam doesn’t turn up precious soon,’ he said, ‘mark my words, there will be a jolly rumpus!’ At half-past nine, Madam being still absent, there was a most fearful yelling and clamour. Thereupon a member of the committee announced that the meeting would be postponed until the following Monday. On being asked to return the cash paid for admission, he said that the money-taker had gone home. The noise that followed was of a frightful character. A young lady among them then addressed the gathering. ‘If,’ she said, ‘Mrs. Dexter does not come forward and return us our money, we are being properly swindled.’ Several others denounced the affair as an unmitigated hoax.”

An inauspicious beginning, and one not calculated to advance the cause of Bloomerism in England. Still, Mrs. Dexter, when interviewed by a reporter, had an explanation to offer. It was that “the crowd had prevented her getting into the building.”

Although she had shrunk from facing a Finsbury audience Mrs. Dexter appeared to think she would have better luck with a Scottish one, and accordingly betook herself to Glasgow. Not knowing what awaited her there, she hired the City Hall, where an audience of 5000 had assembled. Yet, “this number did not include hundreds of ticket-holders, whose demands for admission when the building was already chock-full were both loud and prolonged.”

The Glasgow papers had full reports of the meeting.

“The lecturer’s attire,” said one of them, “was the object of eager scrutiny ; and we observed some desperate attempts on the part of various gents in the front chairs to secure a close glimpse of Madam’s famous ‘trousers.’ The only decorative portion of

her get-up that we ourselves could see was a sash of the Victorian tartan tied across her ample bodice. In our opinion very few ladies (and many were present) are, from the specimen now offered them, likely to adopt 'Bloomerism.' Mrs. Dexter cannot be less than 35 years of age. She may well be more ; but this is a delicate subject for masculine discussion, and we forbear pursuing it.

"Amid continued interruptions, accompanied by mocking jeers and the waving of hats and handkerchiefs, Mrs. Dexter delivered her promised discourse. On questions being invited from the audience, a wag enquired if the fair Bloomer herself was endowed with good 'understandings.' Similar queries followed, as well as cries of disapprobation and distinct threats from more than one quarter ; and it was with some difficulty that Madam got off the platform and left by a side door. Had she not done so, she would probably have experienced a noisy demonstration from a group waiting for her at the front entrance. Whatever may be the case elsewhere, 'Bloomerism,' we assure our readers, will not go down in Glasgow."

Disapproval was also registered by a second journal :

"Despite the eloquence of Mrs. Dexter," remarked this stern critic, "there is small prospect of the new Bloomer costume becoming popular among our modest Scottish ladies. The fact that men may wear kilts with propriety is no reason for the fair sex to adopt 'continuations' at the bidding of a mere stranger from America."

When this was reported to her, Mrs. Bloomer wrote to the *Daily News* :

"SIR,

"May I be allowed to ask in your columns why the British public is so horrified at the idea of a woman dressing in trousers, seeing that they have for many

years tolerated a number of men from the North of the Tweed wearing petticoats, and shockingly short petticoats, too?

AMELIA BLOOMER.”

As nobody appeared able to give the desired information, the subject was allowed to drop.

3

Undeterred by this little set-back in Glasgow, a “London Bloomer Committee” was formed, “to put things right in the metropolis.” As a preliminary flourish, they issued a handbill :

“In consequence of the great interest with which ‘Bloomerism’ is being everywhere received by all classes, a number of London ladies have formed a committee to give it the necessary attention. A public lecture relating to the same will be delivered at the Royal Soho Theatre on October 6. The ladies of the committee will themselves appear in full Bloomer costume, and the mothers and daughters of England are cordially invited to attend.”

Although the “Bloomer Lecture” clashed with a reception to the Hungarian patriot, Kossuth, which had been arranged for the same evening, it attracted a large audience. They were not disappointed, for the committee kept their promise. Judging from a contemporary report, the evening was an exciting one :

“At the back of the stage was a table with the conventional water-bottle, and a bust, which appeared to be that of Her Majesty wearing what was presumably a laurel wreath, but which far more resembled an old handkerchief tied round her august brow. On the curtain being rung up, twenty young ladies, all clad in the new costume, took their seats in a

semi-circle. The gentlemen among the audience received them with ironical cheers and laughter. This caused some of the young ladies (who were obviously of a timid disposition) to retire into the wings, to recover their composure.

"The address itself had some odd touches. Con- tending that morality in feminine attire was all a matter of habit, the expert offered an anecdote. A Quaker lady in Bristol had, she said, two young daughters, and their brother suggested that they should wear drawers. At this, the mother was highly indignant, and declared that they should do nothing so indelicate."

As may be imagined, such a testimonial to "Bloomer-ism" was received with "mingled hisses and laughter." Thereupon the speaker roundly informed the audience that they were "lacking in courtesy, and demanded that they should sing the National Anthem."

"The 'Bloomers,' " says another account, "were evidently timid persons, and their continual hitchings at their seats and involuntary changes of position showed that they found trousers to be somewhat uncomfortable garments compared with petticoats. Despite some jocose remarks (not always in the best taste) from the gallery, the lecturer was well received ; and it was not until she began to discuss feminine suffrage that interruptions occurred. When this happened, a lady sympathiser in one of the boxes appealed for British fair play. 'I am sure,' she said, 'that our visitor's motives are strictly pure and that she does not wish to offend.' "

Thus encouraged, the lecturer warmed to her task. "If Queen Victoria," she observed, "understood the real advantages of the Bloomer costume, it would undoubtedly be adopted by the Royal Family and Maids of Honour at Buckingham Palace." She then



"BLOOMER CAMPAIGN" IN LONDON

told her astonished hearers that she would read them a descriptive pamphlet published in Holywell Street. "This announcement," adds a report, "elicited severe animadversions from the agitated occupants of the stalls, and Madam was quietly informed by the shocked chairman of the infamous character of that particular thoroughfare. Three cheers were then given for Mrs. Bloomer, and a young lady sang the National Anthem."

Not in the least put out by these happenings, the organisers stuck to their guns and issued a fresh advertisement :

"The Ladies of the London Bloomer Committee have the honour to announce that, owing to the great success of the Bloomer lecture delivered last night, it will positively be repeated this evening."

It was repeated ; and, "Bloomerism" being news, reporters, notebooks in hand, assembled in force. The *Times* had a very full account :

"Half-past eight came, the lights were turned on, and the ladies entered in every variety of Bloomer costume, of all ages, and with faces of the most portentous gravity, as if they were sacrificing themselves for the good of their country, but still, like heroines, were determined to go through with it. . . . We were most struck with the matron of the party, who seemed to suffer from bashfulness, and was attired in sombre black. Her hat was of brigandish dimensions, and from it depended a few inches of black lace, which almost concealed her countenance from the inquisitive gaze of the spectators. . . . The lecturer herself was by far the best got up of the party. Her things fitted her, and she wore them as if accustomed to them, which cannot be said of her fair disciples, who really merit some praise

for the courage they showed in sitting still to be stared at.

“In the matter of dress, said the speaker, an intolerable amount of interference had been exercised by men. She knew of an old woman being refused admittance to Greenwich Hospital by the porter because she was wearing a man’s hat. Yet she had visited the Lady Mayoress in it. . . . What was moral for a man was also moral for a woman, and, conversely, if there was any immorality in pantaloons, men ought not to wear them. If it was only a matter of taste, and no immorality could be attached to it, then men ought to leave women to exercise their own judgment. Was it considered immoral to appear with bare arms and a low-necked dress? She did not know what would be thought of this in a London ball-room, as she had never been in one. In America, however, it would be considered very improper if a girl appeared otherwise. . . . After strongly urging the dress for adoption by English ladies, she withdrew with her disciples, the matron solemnly bringing up the rear, and calling down much laughter from the audience, who, however, behaved throughout the lecture most decorously.”

4

Striking while the iron was hot, so to speak, additional lectures were arranged, several of them in districts that scarcely ranked as Mayfair. Thus, one such announcement ran :

“On Wednesday next, Mrs. Wingrove will, by permission of the secretary, appear in Bloomer costume at the Walworth Literary Institute and address a few words to the females present. Doors open at 8 o’clock. Women of Walworth, ’tis for your own good we come among you !”

At the appointed hour Mrs. Wingrove, “wearing plum-coloured silk trousers,” appeared on the platform at this haunt of culture. Her contention was that “fashion should be brought before the bar of public opinion, and that its tyrannous requirements should be devoted to a holier and higher purpose. The name of Mrs. Bloomer,” she added, “would be handed down to posterity with greater glory than those of their most distinguished generals; and it was possible that she merited more praise than the Duke of Wellington himself.”

The intelligentsia of Walworth declined to accept this claim seriously; and, “after the National Anthem had been sung, there were loud requests for ‘Yankee Doodle.’”

Of the lecturer herself, the *Times* remarked:

“If we were called on to guess the lady’s calling in the world, we should unhesitatingly say the stage. Her get-up was eminently theatrical; but, as the Bloomer professors and disciples generally wear the most strange and startling costume, that evidence would go for nothing. But her action, the way she ‘took the stage,’ her rounded periods and dramatic diction, would go far to stamp her as a Thespian votary.”

This opinion was shared by a second authority:

“The visitor had the bearing of one accustomed to tread the boards of the minor suburban theatres. Madam was in the middle of her disquisition when several extra Bloomers strolled on to the platform. Like their leader, they were so oddly attired in coloured sashes and flopping hats that the audience burst into loud guffaws. This obviously annoyed Madam. ‘I really think,’ she said, ‘that the British public should listen before they laugh.’”

Other lectures on "Bloomerism and the Philosophy of Dress" were delivered at Peckham by Miss Emily Griswold, and at the Horns Tavern, Kennington, by Miss Louisa Larpent. But this was not all, for "An American Lady of Literary Reputation" spread the same doctrines at the Stingo Hall, Paddington; and a Miss Atkins followed her at a Mechanics' Institute in the Mile End Road.

"The fair débutante," said an evening journal, referring to Miss Atkins, "was welcomed in a hearty manner. She wore a really fetching little hat trimmed with feathers and pink ribbon. Her open bodice displayed a neatly embroidered chemisette, and the skirt (as well as the article which shall be nameless) was of black satin. On removing the cloak in which her form was enveloped, she curtsied and bowed to the audience, and a full-blown Bloomer stood revealed. Some of the rougher sex jeered; others roared with laughter; and the ladies joined in the general hilarity."

Not in the least upset, Miss Atkins (described by an impressionable reporter as "most enthusiastic and very pretty") harangued the gathering. "What we want to know," she declared, "is shall we be allowed to judge for ourselves, or must we submit to being held up to posterity as magpies, peacocks, and jackdaws? Take my word for it," she added, "before six months shall have passed, the Bloomer style will be the accepted style of England." A Mrs. Smart, who appeared at Southwark, elaborated this point. "Queen Victoria's recent ascent of a Scottish mountain," she said, "afforded grounds for enquiry whether Her Majesty would not have felt more comfortable in trousers. If," she added, "the illustrious and beloved lady at the head of this realm understood the advantages to be derived from wearing

this dress, she would certainly adopt it, and all loyal subjects would hasten to follow her example.”

Another champion, Miss Rustle, submitted a fresh argument, and one that she felt would prove convincing. “Tell your husbands,” she urged a Holborn gathering, “that the new costume saves money. When you have done that, they will be sure to shout ‘Bloomers for Ever!’”

Unfortunately, what they did shout was something quite different; and, complained the discomfited emissary, “a number of dreadfully coarse remarks were passed.”

A lecture was also among the advertised “turns” at the Surrey Music-hall.

“During the past week,” announced a theatrical organ, “the interesting topic of Bloomerism has been thoroughly discussed, sifted, and examined in a regular genuine manner at this favourite resort, where the spirited proprietor has secured Miss Kate Harley to address his patrons on the subject.”

The lot of anyone daring enough to upset accepted notions of “womanliness” is apt to be hard. If there were “Bloomerites” there were also “anti-Bloomerites.” One of the latter saw in the threatened novelty “the precursor of our downfall among nations.” She saw it, moreover, so clearly that she felt constrained to unburden herself on the subject in print :

“Gentlemen of our beloved England, fathers and husbands, I ask you whether you would not prefer that your wives and daughters should adhere to chaste and properly feminine attire, rather than adopt the hoyden dress proposed by Mrs. Bloomer.” A still sterner note was struck by somebody else : “The Bloomer costume is perhaps all very well for masquerading, for

Mahometans abroad, and for shrimp-catchers here, but the matrons of England can never be converted to sudden indecency. Where is the husband, father, or brother who would tolerate 'Bloomerism' in those near and dear to them ? ”

This appeal touched a responsive chord ; and a series of “ Anti-Bloomer Addresses ” was delivered at the Southwark Literary Institution. One of these led to some trouble, for the lecturer (described as “ late of the theatres ”) was alleged to be “ a woman of notoriously bad character ” ; and an action was brought against her by a journalist for “ lifting ” material from a pamphlet he had written. The defence was a denial, and also that the pamphlet was “ a trashy affair, full of libels on Lord Palmerston.” Then, during the address, a member of the audience, a Mr. Padley, “ took exception to the speaker’s remarks.” Worse followed, for, “ being in a state of brandy and water, Mr. P., after Madam had left the platform, obtruded himself behind the screen which served as her retiring place ; and the row had to be quelled by a constable.”

Quick to take advantage of what might be only a momentary craze, Madame Tussaud’s wax-works included a “ Bloomer ” among the exhibits of that establishment ; and the *Times*, with its pulse on the public, was delivered of a leading article :

“ It would be idle to simulate ignorance of the doctrines and proceedings of the BLOOMERS. Their propagandism is carried on in no hesitating form. On the same day, at the most distant points, groups of young ladies make their appearance in public attired in the guise of a Turkish *corps de ballet*. They are, for the moment at least, the objects of universal ridicule. . . . Such is the reward of the pioneers of

change too violent for the period in which they live. Time is the one great element in all reforms which are destined to exert any very beneficial or permanent sway over the habits and institutions of a numerous people. It is because the more enthusiastic partisans of change wilfully close their eyes to this obvious truth that their efforts are so seldom attended with success.

“The BLOOMER, however, is a persevering animal. Derisive shouts will scarcely stop a career in which a man or woman may have entered under the influence of inordinate vanity. We must make up our minds to live with BLOOMERS to the end of time, although few would care to be numbered amongst their ranks.’

Perhaps what chiefly militated against the general adoption of the “new costume” was its origin. Where England was concerned, its American source was suspect. “Bloomerism,” announced a publicist (hitting the nail squarely on the head), “should have crossed the Channel, and not the Atlantic. Had it come to London from Paris, it would have secured an abundance of followers in a week.”

5

As was only to be expected, everybody who could do so sought to make capital out of the novelty. An enterprising publican set the ball rolling by putting his barmaids into trousers, thereby increasing the consumption of beer at his establishment. Similar activity in other directions. Thus, the “Bloomer Polka,” the “Bloomer Waltz,” and the “Bloomer Quadrilles” were strummed everywhere; and an alleged comic song, “The Bloomer Costume,” had an honoured place in all the 1851 pantomimes. This effort was

declared to be "a genteel little bit of badinage on a subject which is now agitating the feminine mind throughout the kingdom. The most fastidious lady in the land could sing this song without a blush, for there is not one indelicate allusion in it." A specimen verse was the following :

A description I will give exact
Of this new dress, neat and compact.
The charming Bloomer Costume !
A satin tunic, white and chaste,
Snugly fitting round the waist,
The feet in pretty slippers cased.
The hair done plain, but yet with taste.
A spencer set her off, I ween,
A neater fairy ne'er was seen—
In fact, she's Spencer's "Fairy Queen"
When in the Bloomer Costume !

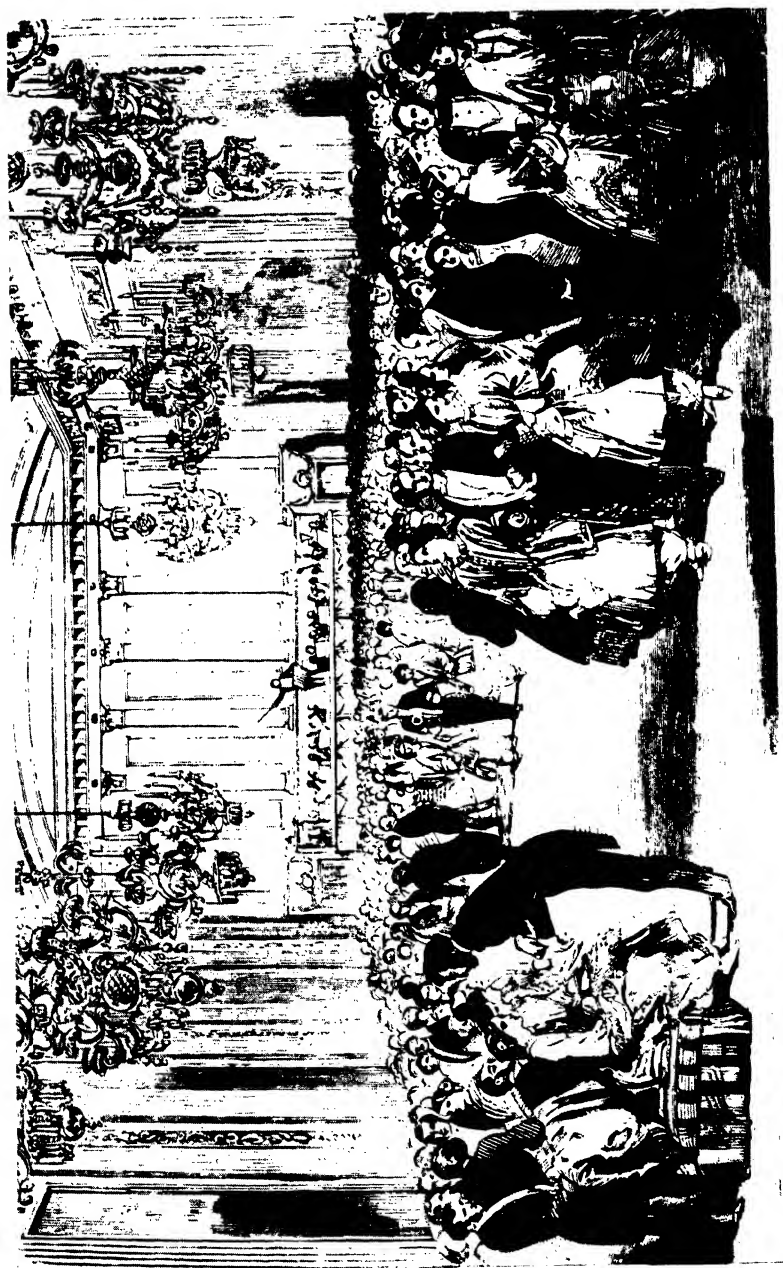
Following this example, the Judge and Jury Society, at the Garrick's Head, found a niche in their programme for a "slick case, in which a novel feature of feminine influence is recognised :

In Turkish breeks and eyes so bright
Amelia Bloomer blooms each night !

"Visitors are requested to come early, and to be prepared to laugh heartily."

According to the "Press notices," this effort was responsible for "whirlwinds of applause and cataracts of hilarity." It does not, however, sound very rib-rending. Another attempt to lure the public was a debate on "Bloomerism versus Tights" at the Coal Hole Tavern ; and a "screaming farce," billed as "Bloomerism, or the Follies of the Day," was offered at the Adelphi Theatre.

But the real effort was reserved for something else, and something on a larger scale. "A Grand Bloomer



THE "BLOOMER BALL."
Tersichore and "Trousers."

Ball” (following a performance of Bulwer Lytton’s *Not so Bad as we Seem*) was announced by an entrepreneur to be given “under distinguished patronage,” at the Hanover Square Rooms. “It is most respectfully intimated,” said the advertisement, “that no lady will be admitted except in correct Bloomer attire ; and full evening-dress will be *de rigueur* for gentlemen.” Almack’s band was engaged ; and a “special sit-down supper” was also promised. The lure was irresistible ; and the tickets, which cost fifteen shillings each, went off well.

A paper called the *Era* had a glowing preliminary puff : “A real Bloomer Ball,” it announced, “under the most distinguished patronage, sufficient to guarantee its most perfect respectability, is something to talk of. It is a charming idea, and we expect the response will be magnificent.”

But the “distinguished patronage” that was promised seems to have gone elsewhere, for in its next issue the *Era* adopted a very different tone :

“The Hanover Square Rooms, about which hang so many respectable and charming associations, were desecrated by what transpired there on Wednesday. At a late hour a few of the fair, and, alas ! the frail, sex had impudence enough to appear ; and of a verity, the crowd made the most of them. There was pushing one way, and tearing another. The jostling of men, the screams of women, the interruptions of ‘gents,’ and the jeering of girls. . . . The men were outrageously gallant, and, in their boisterous mirth, put aside all thoughts of propriety. . . . At supper a regular row ensued. First, bread flew about ; next, cakes ; then, glasses ; and, ultimately, bottles. The police were summoned, and immediately fell to work clearing the premises. Thus ended the Bloomer Demonstration—as disreputable an affair as can well be imagined.

“We hope our speculative cousins on the other side of the Atlantic will not run away with the notion that Bloomerism is likely to become popular here ; or that the dress peculiar to it has been, or is ever likely to be, adopted by any portion, however small, of the respectable women of Great Britain. . . . We have had our laugh at the foreign conceit ; and now away with the unseemly innovation, lest its vain disciples—half women and half men—think they have really made an impression. Hitherto, we have forbore to make special mention of this disgusting trade which hen-spouters would make of a mountebank garb.”

The *Morning Chronicle* said much the same thing, but said it more succinctly : “There will be no good done to Bloomerism by last night’s exhibition.”

“We found,” remarked another stern critic, “the corridors and stairs thronged with gentlemen. The majority of them had clearly been dining, and were pushing each other about and occasionally employing language that was stronger than was consistent with absolute propriety. . . . As to the ladies, we may as well say at once that they did not compose the *élite*. The peerage was well represented, and also the House of Commons. The clubs, too, must have been practically emptied, for one lit upon faces familiar in the upper circles, belonging to Guards officers, dandies, authors, artists, actors, barristers, and the like. There was much pushing and jostling. Sometimes a cheer would be raised for a fat Bloomer, or a thin Bloomer, or an old Bloomer, or a young Bloomer, or a Bloomer with gaudy ribbons and flaunting features. Several of them were attired in Turkish trousers, and others in drawers (or whatever they are called), fitting as closely to the legs as pantalettes. As to what occurred at supper, we did not feel it incumbent upon us to stop and witness. We understand, however, that the scene was really a very shocking one.”

“A more sublime ‘sell’ than the Bloomer Ball cannot be imagined,” said a second account. “About 700 people attended the gathering, some 20 of them being women got up in a Holywell Street cross between the orthodox Bloomer costume and that of ballet-dancers. The length of their petticoats varied considerably, but in every case several inches of trousers were visible. Many of the fair sex had their heads uncovered; and one of them, well on the shady side of forty, had half a yard of ringlets.

“The masculine patrons comprised leading members of the aristocracy and raffish men-about-town. The latter welcomed any stray Bloomer who appeared among them with a perfect hurricane of cheers; and, as the licence of the evening waxed stronger, they enforced the welcome with a ruffianly salvo of kisses. As for the Bloomers themselves, they unhappily belonged to a class which evinced no real objection to such misconduct on the part of the mustachioed mob. We leave our readers to draw their own moral from the scandalous affair.”

Another organ of public opinion was similarly severe.

“An attempt,” it announced in a tearful column, “was made on Wednesday evening at the Hanover Square Rooms to try the effect of a *bal costume à la Bloomer* in accomplishing for the new American fashion what lectures and promenades have not yet done, viz. to secure the adoption of the novel attire for the female sex in England. But the effort was a decided and well-deserved failure; and those who thronged the gathering could not be regarded as models, in either their dress or their deportment. Altogether, a very reprehensible affair and thoroughly discreditable to all concerned. By identifying it with the doubtful associations attached to the *débardeur* of a Carnival Ball in Paris, the Bloomer Ball in London has sealed the fate of the Bloomer costume for our modest and well-bred British womanhood.”

Mr. Punch, too, was seriously upset ; and, in addition to cracking various jests on the subject, employed his staff poet to belabour the " Bloomer Ball " :

Thinly scattered are the females, scorning custom's decent rules,
Dense the pack of men assembled, looking like a crowd of fools.
Well ! 'tis well that 'tis a failure ; had it more successful proved,
Perhaps the hateful Bloomer nuisance for a time had onwards
moved.

That the bad manners were not limited to the ball-room was clear from a last report :

" A costly and elaborate supper was served, but this soon degenerated into a veritable riot. On their departure, the riff-raff which had assembled outside the building greeted the Bloomer ladies with mocking jeers ; and one victim, we learn, had her clothes almost torn from her back. The disturbance, indeed, was so pronounced that the police had to be summoned to empty the hall ; and several arrests were made. As an aftermath, two young lords and six medical students were fined the next morning by the Marlborough-street magistrate."

As a result of this fiasco, the Committee announced that " those ladies who suffered annoyance at the Hanover Square Rooms, in consequence of the improper conduct of certain unmannerly individuals (whose names are well known), would be supplied free of charge with admission tickets to a second ball " ; and a series of " Four Transatlantic Soirées " was also announced to be held at the Bloomer Hall, Knightsbridge. The *amende honorable*.

To clear up any misunderstanding, and to make it obvious to the public that the members of the genuine Bloomer Committee had not countenanced the Hanover Square gathering, one of their number, Mrs. Tracy, wrote to the *Times* :

“I had not the slightest connection whatever with the above-named ball. I was neither there, nor did I give my sanction to any of its proceedings, either directly or indirectly. I also believe that no one advocating dress reform from high moral principles was there, unless deceived in regard to the character and arrangements.

“Of these I should have known nothing, but for the reports of the Press and the statements made to me by a gentleman who was induced to attend with his wife, under the assurance that it would be of the most unexceptionable character. When, on his arrival, he found that he had been deceived, he, with his wife and two or three other ladies who had also gone under a false impression, retired to the gallery and waited there until the dispersal of the mob rendered it safe for them to withdraw.”

6

Where England was concerned, the untoward happenings in Hanover Square did, as may be imagined, much to damage the cause of “Bloomerism.” Hard knocks were also dealt out by the *Annual Register* in its summary for 1851 :

“An attempted revolution in female dress,” declared this authority, “which caused much amusement and ridicule, must not be passed over. The new dress, which took its name of the ‘Bloomer costume’ from the lady of a distinguished American officer, is said to have gained ground in America. In this country it encountered an abundance of wit and ridicule. Female lecturers in full costume, attended by a few females in the same dress, endeavoured to familiarise England with the novelty, but all in vain. A number of dashing damsels—of what character is unknown—sport the hybrid garments in some public places ; but the dress having been adopted by women whose character was not at all doubtful, and by barmaids, the absurdity died away.”

*THE “MAIDEN TRIBUTE OF
MODERN BABYLON”*

The "Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon"

I

IN the autumn of 1881 a fresh chapter in newspaper history was made by the appointment of William Thomas Stead to the staff of the *Pall Mall Gazette*. The new recruit had come from a provincial office at Darlington, and was full of ideas and vigour and a determined resolve to "wake up London." John Morley, who was then conducting the paper, on orthodox liberal lines, has, in his *Recollections*, a picture of him at this period :

"We were lucky enough to induce to join us as assistant a man from the North of England who, by and by sailing under his own flag, became for a season the most powerful journalist in the island. Stead was invaluable ; abounding in journalistic resource, eager in convictions, infinitely bold, candid, laborious in sure-footed mastery of all the facts, and bright with a cheerfulness and geniality that no difference of opinion between us and none of the passing embarrassments of the day could ever for a moment damp. His extraordinary vigour and spirit made other people seem wet blankets, sluggish creatures of moral *défaillance*."

A sound enough estimate, except for one slip. This was the reference to Stead's "sure-footed mastery of all the facts." In reality, he was supremely indifferent to facts, and never let himself be hampered by them. But, as an exponent of what he himself called "the new journalism," he could scarcely be anything else, for "the new journalism," according to Matthew Arnold, "throws out assertions at a venture because it wishes them to be true."

After three years in a subordinate capacity, a turn

of the wheel found Stead advanced to the dignity of the editorial chair, with Alfred Milner as his subaltern. This was his opportunity. He made the most of it, and at once infused into the sedate (and hitherto somewhat stodgy) columns of the *Pall Mall Gazette* a spirit of dash and enterprise that left its readers gasping. Still, he sent up the circulation to a figure it had never known.

But it was not until the summer of 1885 that the result of his efforts put himself and the *Pall Mall Gazette* in a real blaze of limelight. The circumstance was specially welcome, for, as it happened, things were just then, from a "news" point of view, distinctly quiet. Thus, there were no scandals above the average to attract attention; company-promoters were turning over fresh leaves; and public interest in the death of Gordon and the mismanagement of the Sudan campaign had slackened perceptibly.

It was at this juncture that the City Chamberlain, Mr. Benjamin Scott, "a venerable old gentleman of seventy-five," happened to call at the office of the *Pall Mall Gazette*. His purpose was to tell the editor that the pending collapse of the Gladstone Government would jeopardise the passage of the Criminal Law Amendment Bill and to ask him to "stir up public opinion on the subject." Stead promised to "see what could be done." He made enquiries, and found that the measure to which his visitor referred was one based on the Report of a Select Committee appointed to consider the better protection of women and young girls. The Bill had been before Parliament since 1881. It looked as if it would stop there, for, although it had three times secured the approval of the Lords, it had been systematically held up and obstructed by the

Commons. The trouble was, its supporters were not taken seriously ; and, session after session, the measure was introduced, only to be talked out, blocked out, whittled down to almost nothing, and then dropped. This apathy was regrettable, for the proposed amendments were very much needed. As the law on the subject stood, a girl of thirteen was held to be a woman, and thus competent to connive at her own seduction ; and a child who had been corrupted by a man could not give evidence on oath.

On his attention being drawn to this state of affairs, Stead indignantly protested that it was enough to “ rouse hell.” A Scotland Yard official, however, informed him that, so far from having such a result, “ it didn’t even rouse the neighbours.”

“ Then I will rouse the country,” returned Stead, “ and compel them to accept the Bill.”

But, as he soon discovered, this was easier said than done. The country, it appeared, evinced no particular anxiety to be “ roused.” Careful soundings in various directions brought discouraging results. “ The subject,” he wrote, “ was tabooed by the Press. The very horror of the crime was the chief secret of its persistence.”

But to a man of Stead’s calibre, opposition only acted as a spur. It filled him with a fierce resolve to get the Bill on the statute book. Before long, he convinced himself that the difficulties could be surmounted, and that he was the man to surmount them. Having arrived at this conclusion, he saw the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Bishop of London, and Cardinal Manning, and endeavoured to enlist their support for a scheme he had evolved. Dr. Benson “ shuddered,” but Dr. Temple and the Cardinal were more sympathetic.

The Primate's attitude was disappointing. Still, it was not unnatural, for Stead's scheme was certainly a daring one. This was that he himself should "prove," by "procuring for immoral purposes a girl of thirteen," that the conditions mentioned in the Report of the Select Committee really did exist.

Dr. Benson thought this "going too far." Stead disagreed with him. Nor did he consider that the rôle of *agent-provocateur*, for which he was prepared to cast himself, had anything objectionable about it. Further, the ends to be secured thereby would, he argued, justify the methods adopted. These methods were certainly odd ; and, in a less genuine character, would have been considered distinctly equivocal. As it was, they got him into very hot water, the temperature of which at one time was not far removed from boiling-point.

Conceiving the idea (entirely fanciful) that the real obstacle to getting the Bill passed was the lack of proof that "vice" existed in London, he set out to secure it. His plan was to show Scotland Yard that "British mothers were willing to sell the virginity of their daughters." A "well-known Member of Parliament" (name not given) offered to supply him with "a hundred virgins at £25 each." Stead thought the tariff rather high. Also, he only wanted one.

Although it was an unpleasant crusade, and might well have been officially scheduled a dangerous occupation, Stead did not shrink from it. As a preliminary, he assembled a corps of "special commissioners" (with himself as "Chief Director") to collect information as to the "prevalence of vice." His principal assistant was a journalist, Sampson Jacques (also known as Mussabini) ; and other volunteers were recruited from



Rischgitz Collection

WILLIAM THOMAS STEAD
Crusader in "Modern Babylon."

the staff of the *Pall Mall Gazette*. The band of helpers were kept busy. "For a month," an interviewer was informed, "they were occupied with this work in all parts of London, and were in private communication with everybody, moral and immoral, who was supposed to be able to throw any light on the subject."

The editor of *Truth* gave his colleague good counsel. Unfortunately, it was not adopted by Mr. Stead. "I had," wrote Henry Labouchere, "a conversation with him when he was full of what he was going to do. I told him that his facts must be cast iron; and that he was not to believe all he was told when drinking champagne with questionable characters."

While some of the "facts" offered the "Chief Director" were "cast iron," others were decidedly base metal. A number of the research-workers, it appears, rather took advantage of their employer. They knew that he wanted "revelations." Accordingly, they supplied them; and, in doing so, they did not always probe too deeply into their genuineness. But this did not matter, for Stead accepted them as gospel, and filled his notebook to the brim. It was all "good copy."

For the carrying out of his scheme, it was necessary to assume the rôle of a "vicious man-about-town," and to be supplied with a girl of thirteen, "ostensibly for immoral purposes." Stead's journalistic career had given him a fairly wide knowledge of the underworld, but information on this particular point had not yet come within his orbit. As he always believed in consulting experts, he consulted the Rev. Mr. Horsley, chaplain of Clerkenwell Prison, and General Booth, of the Salvation Army. This latter was a sound choice, as nobody was better fitted to advise him. The "General" could and did render the assistance wanted. Through

his son Bramwell Booth, he put the enquirer in touch with one of his feminine flock, a certain Rebecca Jarrett. This was a woman with a "past," being, in fact, an "ex-procuress." She had, however, recently abandoned the career, and, fitted out with a tambourine and poke bonnet complete, had become a zealous member of the "Army."

When Stead, without any beating about the bush, told her point-blank that he wanted her to "procure" a young girl for him, Rebecca Jarrett very properly declined to entertain the suggestion. Having sat on the penitents' form and sung hymns at street corners, nothing else could have been expected of her. Still, she did not hold out long; and, convinced by Mrs. Josephine Butler of Stead's bona fides, and the value of the results to be secured by helping him, her scruples were overcome, and she promised to do her best.

From her first meeting with him, Mrs. Butler, who had herself done a great deal of rescue work among women and girls, was much impressed by the "Chief Director's" obvious sincerity.

"He is," she wrote at this juncture, "publicly known only as a brave and enterprising reformer. But to my mind the memory is ever present of a dark night on which I entered his office, after a day of hand-to-hand wrestling with the Powers of Hell. We stumbled up the narrow stairs; the lights were out; not a soul was there; it was midnight. I scarcely recognised the haggard face before me as that of Mr. Stead. He threw himself across his desk with a cry like that of a bereaved and outraged mother, rather than that of an indignant man, and sobbed out the words, 'Oh, Mrs. Butler, let me weep, let me weep or my heart will break!' He then told me in broken sentences of the little girls he had seen that day sold in the fashionable West-end brothels."

Following her instructions, the first step adopted by Rebecca Jarrett was to call on an old friend, a Mrs. Broughton, with a carefully concocted story. This was that “she was married, and wanted a young servant girl for her nice little six-roomed house at Wimbledon.” Mrs. Broughton, anxious to make an honest penny out of the business for herself, introduced Rebecca to a neighbour, a Mrs. Armstrong, the wife of a chimney-sweeper living in a Marylebone slum and the mother of a girl of thirteen called Eliza. But everything was not plain sailing; and Mrs. Armstrong began by protesting that her daughter was too young for domestic employment. On, however, receiving from Mrs. Broughton an assurance that Rebecca Jarrett was a “respectable married woman,” she changed her mind and agreed to let the girl go if she could come home once a month. No payment was made Mrs. Armstrong, but she was given a shilling for her baby. None the less, Stead afterwards announced that she had “sold her daughter to him for immoral purposes in return for £5.”

A firm believer in doing a thing thoroughly, Stead hired a room from an accommodating landlady, and instructed Rebecca Jarrett and Jacques (whom, with his passion for periphrasis, he described as his “courier”) to bring his “victim” there. The first thing he then did, “to prove that a little harlot had not been palmed off upon him,” was to have the girl physically examined. This service was, at the instance of the helpful Jacques, carried out by a French procuress, Louise Mourez. Unlike Rebecca Jarrett, however, she was not a “converted” one. On her report that all was as it should be, little Eliza was taken off in a cab to a brothel in Poland Street. There she was given a whiff of

chloroform and undressed and put to bed. But the drug was not very effective, or else the dose was infinitesimal, for when, a few minutes later, Stead, in his character of a "vicious man," entered the room, she woke up and exclaimed, "There's a man here!" Thereupon Stead at once withdrew. He had accomplished his purpose; he had been "left alone with a virgin."

But there was still more to be done, before the appointed programme was completed. Another remarkable experience was yet to be undergone by the wretched Eliza, who was next carried off to a nursing-home. There she was re-examined by a doctor, who certified that she had not sustained any physical injury. He was, however, careful to say nothing about any moral one.

Furnished with this assurance, it might have been thought that Stead would have considered his part in the business accomplished, and that the girl would be restored to her mother. He, however, held a different view. Eliza had still to be "rescued." As the simplest method of securing such a desirable step, he handed her over to the Salvation Army; and, on the assumption, apparently, that its moral atmosphere was purer than that of London, had her taken to Paris the next morning by Rebecca Jarrett and a Madame Combe, described with characteristic circumlocution as a "social worker."

"Even at this day," wrote Stead, twenty-five years afterwards, "I stand amazed at the audacity with which I carried the thing through." He might well have done so, for, if he had proved his point (which, as it happens, had never been in doubt), he had adopted measures that were—to put it mildly—injudicious and illegal. Nor could he understand that—however well

intentioned—no motive could justify an indecent experiment being made upon a child at the cost of its moral welfare ; and more especially when, as in this case, that child is a defenceless young girl. This one, too, had undoubtedly been obtained by him under false pretences, for the mother had been told that she was to be employed by Rebecca Jarrett as a servant. Well, “servant” is an elastic term ; and Stead had stretched it to breaking-point.

In a *Pall Mall Gazette* leader, headed “The Case of Eliza Armstrong,” the treatment accorded the child was glossed over : “Beyond the momentary surprise of the midwife’s examination, which was necessary to prove that a little harlot had not been palmed off upon us,” ran the pronouncement, “she experienced not the slightest inconvenience.”

Stead’s principal slip, of course, was that, in taking Eliza Armstrong from her home, he had neglected to get the permission of her father. It was this circumstance that was to bring a hornets’ nest about his ears and eventually land him in prison. Incidentally, it also led to the doctor who had made the examination being hauled over the coals by the College of Physicians and charged with professional misconduct. The explanation he offered was that he had assumed Stead to be the child’s guardian. As, however, doctors have no business to “assume” anything, this one was severely censored and told that he had brought discredit upon himself and the profession to which he belonged.

All unmindful of what the future held, on July 4, Stead issued a preliminary intimation of his project in the columns of the *Pall Mall Gazette* :

“ We have determined,” he announced, “ with a full sense of responsibility attaching to such a decision to publish the Report of a Special and Secret Commission of Enquiry which we appointed to examine into the whole subject. It is a long, detailed report, dealing with those phases of sexual criminality which the Criminal Law Amendment Bill was framed to repress. Nothing but the most imperious sense of public duty would justify its publication. . . . We say quite frankly to-day that all those who are squeamish, and all those who are prudish, and all those who prefer to live in a fools’ paradise of imaginary innocence and purity, selfishly oblivious of the horrible realities which torment those whose lives are passed in the London Inferno, will do well not to read the *Pall Mall Gazette* of Monday and the three following days.”

The stage having been set, the curtain was (after a flourish, “ Notice to our Readers : A Frank Warning ”) rung up ; and in the issue for July 6, 1885, an introduction to what was to follow appeared as a leading article :

WE BID YOU BE OF GOOD HOPE

“ The Report of our Secret Commission will be read to-day with a shuddering horror that will thrill throughout the world. . . . The good it will do is manifest. These revelations, which we begin to publish to-day, cannot fail to touch the heart and rouse the conscience of the English people. Terrible as is the exposure, the very horror of it is an inspira-

tion. . . . We can at least do much to save the innocent victims who unwillingly are swept into the maelstrom of vice. And who is there among us, bearing the name of man, who will dare to sit down any longer with folded hands in the presence of so great a wrong ? ”

This sounded promising ; and the preliminary instalment of the “ Report,” filling ten and a half columns, and headed “ THE MAIDEN TRIBUTE OF MODERN BABYLON ” with cross-headings, “ The Violation of Virgins,” “ Confessions of a Brothel-Keeper,” and “ Strapping Girls Down ”—had a similar allure. “ It has produced,” declared its author, “ an effect unparalleled in the history of journalism ” ; and Mr. Spurgeon, “ in a characteristic letter,” wrote : “ I feel bowed down with shame and indignation.”

The first article, like those that followed, was written with the mixture of rhodomontade and rhetoric that characterised so much of its author’s journalism. Typical extracts ran :

“ In ancient times, if we may believe the myths of Hellas, Athens, after a disastrous campaign, was compelled by her conqueror to send once every nine years a tribute to Crete of seven youths and seven maidens. The doomed fourteen, who were selected by lot amid the lamentations of the citizens, returned no more. The vessel that bore them to Crete unfurled black sails as the symbol of despair ; and on arrival her passengers were flung into the famous Labyrinth of Dædalus, there to wander about blindly until such time as they were devoured by the Minotaur, a frightful monster, half man, half bull, the foul product of an unnatural lust.

“ . . . The fact that the Athenians should have taken so bitterly to heart the paltry maiden tribute that once in nine years they had to pay to the

Minotaur seems incredible, almost inconceivable. This very night in London, and every night, year in and year out, not seven maidens only, but many times seven, selected almost as much by chance as those who in the Athenian market-place drew lots as to which should be flung into the Cretan labyrinth, will be offered up as the Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon. Maidens they were when this morning dawned, but to-night their ruin will be accomplished, and to-morrow they will find themselves within the portals of the maze of London brotheldom. Within that labyrinth wander, like lost souls, the vast host of London prostitutes, whose numbers no man can compute, but who are probably not much below 50,000 strong. Many, no doubt, who venture but a little way within the maze make their escape. But multitudes are swept irresistibly on and on to be destroyed in due season, to give place to others, who will also share their doom. The maw of the London Minotaur is insatiable ; and none that go into the secret recesses of his lair return again.

“ Yet, so far from this great city being convulsed with woe, London cares for none of these things, and the cultured man of the world, the heir of all the ages, the ultimate product of a long series of civilisations and religions, will shrug his shoulders in scorn at the folly of anyone who ventures in public print to raise even the mildest protest against a horror a thousand times more horrible than that which, in the youth of the world, haunted like a nightmare the imagination of mankind. Nevertheless, I have not yet lost faith in the heart and conscience of the English folk, the sturdy innate chivalry and right thinking of our common people ; and although I am no vain dreamer of Utopias peopled solely by Sir Galahads and vestal virgins, I am not without hope that there may be some check placed upon this vast tribute of maidens, unwitting or unwilling, which is nightly levied in London by the vices of the rich upon the necessities of the poor. . . . If the daughters of the people

must be served up as dainty morsels to minister to the passions of the rich, let them at least attain an age when they can understand the nature of the sacrifice which they are asked to make. And if we must cast maidens—not seven, but seven times seven—nightly into the jaws of vice, let us see to it that they assent to their own immolation, and are not unwilling sacrifices procured by force and fraud. That is surely not too much to ask from the dissolute rich.”

It was in this preliminary article that Stead furnished particulars of his connection with the Eliza Armstrong affair, adding, “I can personally vouch for the accuracy of every fact in the narrative.” But this quality was somewhat wanting, since he gave the girl another name; described the father as “a drunken man” and the mother as “poor, dissolute, and indifferent to everything but drink”; and said that, although she knew what was to happen to her daughter, she had “sold her to a brothel-keeper for a sovereign.”

The tariff appears moderate. However, it was pre-war.

The four other articles of the series were of a similar description, and filled nearly fifty closely printed columns. To point the moral, they quoted the Bible; they quoted Shakespeare; they quoted Ovid; and they quoted Mrs. Browning. “The sensation which they produced,” declared their proud author, “was instantaneous and world-wide. They set London and the whole country in a blaze of indignation.”

They did not quite do this. Still, they were certainly responsible for some fluttering. In fact, a very considerable fluttering. Some of this was in the House of Commons; and when the second of the series appeared, with its cross-headings, “Delivered for Seduction,” “Where Maids are Picked Up,” “Procuration in the

West-end," and "A Close Time for Girls," Mr. Cavendish Bentinck, M.P. for Whitehaven, was disturbed. He felt so strongly about it that he asked the Home Secretary "whether any means exist of subjecting the author and publisher of these obscene articles in a paper called the *Pall Mall Gazette* to a criminal prosecution." In his best official manner, Sir Richard Cross replied, "Treating the Hon. Member's question as one of pure law, the publication of obscene matter is a misdemeanour, but the definition of obscene matter must be left to a jury."

Stead himself saw the Home Secretary, and suggested that he should "tell the House that the *Pall Mall Gazette* had covered itself with everlasting glory by this courageous attempt to extirpate a horrible evil." When Sir Richard Cross mildly pointed out that he could scarcely go so far as this, he was offered an alternative : "Then I wish you would say that it has committed an abominable outrage on public morals, and that you have instructed the law officers to prosecute me."

This was a challenge. For the moment, however, the authorities were not inclined to accept it.

3

Untroubled by any question of copyright, editors all over the kingdom laid predatory hands on the *Pall Mall Gazette* articles and served them up in their own columns, with comments of approval and disapproval. There were many of the latter. Thus, the *St. James's Gazette* (between which organ and the *P.M.G.* no love was lost) referred to the preliminary instalment as "the vilest parcel of obscenity that has ever issued from the press. . . . Our distinct opinion is that four-fifths of

the narrative is mere imposture. The man who invented the ‘ sensation ’ might have worked it out with some little regard to decency. This shameless creature, however, has flung all decency aside, openly dealing with the worst abominations in the plainest and foulest language. Nothing like it has ever been seen in any public print.” A Sunday contemporary, specialising in the week’s sexual happenings, dubbed the series “ nothing but disgusting pabulum ” ; another declared : “ We feel it our duty to protest against our streets being turned into a market for literature which appeals to the lascivious curiosity of every casual passer-by and excites the latent pruriency of a half-educated crowd ” ; and a third, not to be outdone in registering disagreement, had the following : “ A plague, worse than any Egyptian one, has visited the homes of England. Obscurity is the *Pall Mall Gazette’s* hell ; notoriety is its heaven. It has now become notorious with a vengeance, so notorious, indeed, that it will be kicked out of all virtuous homes.”

Whether this happened, or not, is unrecorded. Still, Marlborough House certainly cancelled its subscription. The Athenæum followed the lead thus given them, with the result that the bishops and judges had to procure their copies privately ; and Messrs. W. H. Smith and Sons banished the paper from their book-stalls. The City Solicitor, too, proved less sympathetic towards Mr. Stead’s efforts to “ clean up London ” than had been his colleague, the City Chamberlain. In fact, he felt so strongly on the subject that he declared the articles to be “ a mass of filth,” and had a number of newsboys summonsed at the Guildhall for “ obstruction ” by exhibiting contents bills. But this came to nothing, for the Lord Mayor very properly declined to convict.

Nor did the bookstall boycott have much effect, beyond producing a characteristic letter from Bernard Shaw. "I am quite willing," he wrote, "to take as many quires of the paper as I can carry, and sell them (for a penny) in any thoroughfare in London."

Edmund Yates, who had himself gone to prison for libel, disapproved of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, and said so in the columns of the *World* :

"The pestilent effort after notoriety made by the conductors of a print, whose past has been distinguished, and whose present was, till recently, respectable, has found aiders and abettors in men who ought to have been the first to shrink from so malodorous an association. Yet the Primate of all England and the Bishop of London, to say nothing of the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Westminster, are now assisting in the labours of a so-called commission, which can have no other effect than to advertise the journal that, on the plea of performing a service in the interest of the health of the community, has flushed the filthiest of sewers and shot its heap of rottenness and rubbish in the open street.

"The investigation engaged in by these ecclesiastics is one which, if it ought to be engaged in at all, should occupy the attention of skilled legal minds. This is not the time when the highest authorities of the Church can with impunity incur the reproach of meddling in an obscene business that does not concern them. It is the duty of bishops to administer their dioceses—not to play the part of private detectives at the instigation of the conductors of a prurient newspaper."

Nor were some of the dailies sympathetically inclined towards the efforts of Stead and his helpers to "purge the metropolis." The *Standard*, for example, was particularly upset.

“We venture to say,” it observed in a solemn leader, “that no other capital in Europe would tolerate for an hour the spectacle presented in the main thoroughfares of London at the present moment of men, women, and children offering to men, women, and children copies of a newspaper containing the most offensive, highly coloured, and disgusting details concerning the vicious ways of a small section of the population. . . . The sewer that runs underground may need cleansing ; but the zeal that makes a handsome profit by turning it into the streets will hardly be appreciated.”

Where the religious Press was concerned, the *Guardian* held the “Report” to be a “gross violation of public decency, with a babbling of ‘minotaurs’ and ‘maiden tributes’ dressed up in the tinsel of the penny-a-liner.” But the wounds (if any) that this pronouncement left had abundant balm poured into them by the *Christian Leader* : “We should,” declared an editorial, “deem ourselves guilty of craven cowardice if we failed to express our admiration of what we believe to be the most heroic service to humanity that has ever been rendered by a public journal in the entire history of the newspaper Press of the world. Only a motive of the purest and most exalted character could have inspired the determination of the conductors of the *Pall Mall Gazette* to make the revelations which during the past week have reverberated through every nook and corner of the Empire.”

The *Methodist Times* said much the same thing ; the *Christian* put its front page into mourning ; and Clement Scott wrote a poem.

“The trumpet blast which we sounded over sea and land last week has roused the world,” declared Stead triumphantly. To a certain extent this was the case,

for there were repercussions across both the Channel and the Atlantic. Thus, Paris affected to shudder at these "manifestations of English vice" ; Vienna refused to allow a translation to be published ; Chicago shook its head ; and a Sunday journal in New York cabled for an extract of 10,000 words.

As was inevitable, all this publicity had a natural result ; and so pronounced was the demand for the *Pall Mall Gazette* that soon there was not enough paper in the office on which to print the issues in which the "Maiden Tribute" articles were appearing. The *Globe*, however, came to the rescue and lent some from its surplus stock. Fresh supplies from the mills were then rushed up by special trains and all was well.

Soon, too, there were brisk doings in Northumberland Street, where the editorial premises were besieged by a surging crowd ("gaunt, hollow-faced men and women, with trailing dresses and ragged coats") fighting and clamouring for copies as fast as they could be printed. It was a risky business, for, the moment the applicants appeared with their bundles, they were set upon by an angry mob. Public feeling ran high. Brickbats were thrown and windows shattered, and the staff hustled and threatened. Police protection had to be sought ; and, to check a possible riot, Scotland Yard despatched a squad of constables. Buckets of ink were exhausted ; and, day after day, postmen staggered to the office, weighed down with sackfuls of anonymous letters of abuse. But there were also signed letters of encouragement and approval. Mr. Spurgeon's blood-pressure reached a hitherto unrecorded pitch. From his stronghold at the Metropolitan Tabernacle he declared that "the more notorious of the evil-doers were Princes of the Blood, with nobles and prominent public men";

and “ during the address of the pastor at the Hanover Chapel, Peckham, many of the congregation shed tears.”

All classes joined in the controversy. Bishops and bookmakers, jockeys and journalists, naval and military veterans, poets and politicians, and stockbrokers and shop assistants, with stenographers and strumpets, sat down and contributed their opinions. The vast majority of them were decidedly pro-Stead ; and among those public men, and women, whose support counted, were Lord Dalhousie, Lord Shaftesbury, Dr. Clifford, Cardinal Manning, and Bernard Shaw, together with Lady Harberton, Mrs. Bramwell Booth, Mrs. Josephine Butler, Mrs. Ormiston Chant, and Mrs. Garrett Fawcett.

While “ the General ” himself kept somewhat in the background, his wife had no qualms as to the absolute correctness of Stead’s methods.

“ And now,” she wrote, “ there followed one of those mighty moral upheavals which require to be witnessed to be understood. For once the national conscience was aroused—more than aroused—it was lashed to fury at the discovery of atrocities perpetrated beneath the very shadow of the law. Vice, caught unawares and stripped of all its pageantry, was dragged remorselessly from its dark hiding-places and pilloried before the public gaze. What the servants of the law were paid to do (but would not do, or dared not do) the Christian enterprise of those who were ready, in the cause of humanity, to risk their own life and reputation in doing was destined to accomplish. Well might the world go nearly mad at the hideous revelations contained in the ‘ Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon,’ which, coming from the able pen of Mr. Stead, stirred so profoundly public sentiment.”

Stead's enemies—and he had many—questioned his single-mindedness of purpose. Such an attitude was unjustifiable. Still, writing under great pressure, it was perhaps inevitable that he should have made a number of slips and written things that, if written by anybody else, he would have blue-pencilled. Thus, in one of them he caused an outburst of remonstrance by declaring that it was unnecessary to raise the “age of consent” beyond sixteen ; and there was also another lapse in an infelicitous demand for a “Close time for girls.”

A “Committee of Investigation,” sitting at the Mansion House, and presided over by Samuel Morley, M.P., with the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Bishop of London, and Cardinal Manning as members, issued a report :

“After carefully sifting the evidence of witnesses and the materials before us, and without guaranteeing the accuracy of every particular, we are satisfied that, taken as a whole, the statements in the *Pall Mall Gazette* on this question are substantially true.”

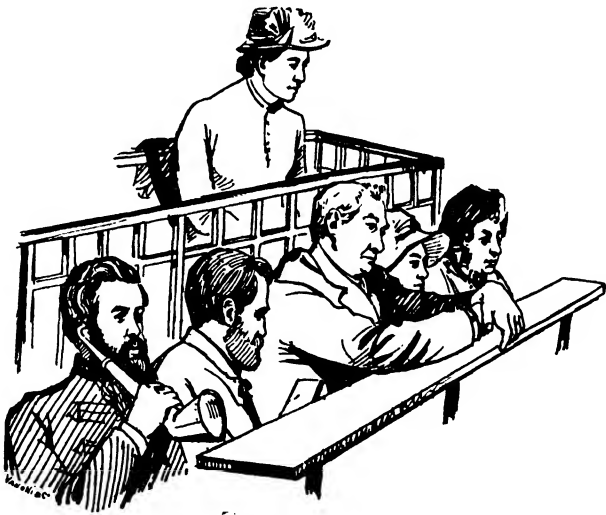
This was, perhaps, a little guarded. Stead, however, had no fault to find with it. As the best method of getting the Bill passed without further delay, he then urged that a series of public meetings should be held throughout the kingdom. Such meetings were held, from John o' Groat's to Land's End, and he himself took the chair at many of them. The main effort, however, was reserved for two mass-meetings in London, one in Hyde Park, and the other in Exeter Hall. They both attracted enormous numbers.

4

Mrs. Armstrong did not read the *Pall Mall Gazette*. A neighbour, however, showed her the issue with an

PRICE SIXPENCE.

THE
ELIZA ARMSTRONG CASE:
BEING A VERBATIM REPORT
OF THE
PROCEEDINGS AT BOW STREET.
WITH
MR. STEAD'S SUPPRESSED DEFENCE.



WITH ILLUSTRATIONS.

"PALL MALL GAZETTE". OFFICE, 2, NORTHUMBERLAND STREET, STRAND, LONDON, W.C.
1885.

THE "ELIZA ARMSTRONG CASE"
A *Pall Mall Gazette* "Extra."

article, “ Child of Thirteen bought for Five Pounds.” Although the girl’s name there was given as “ Lily,” it was obvious from various particulars that the reference was to her daughter Eliza, and she herself was depicted as a drunken and immoral woman. Mrs. Armstrong was not, perhaps, a pattern mother. Still, she had her feelings ; and she considered that they had been badly damaged by the conduct thus attributed to her. Nor did she approve of Paris as a residence for her child. The result was, she lodged a complaint at Marylebone police-court. The magistrate there referred her to Scotland Yard ; and Scotland Yard, having a pretty shrewd idea where to enquire, got into touch with Bramwell Booth. He gave the authorities every assistance ; and, on learning from him the child’s address, a detective and the father left London for Paris. When, however, they arrived there, they discovered that the girl had been sent back to her mother.

The actual restoration was effected by Sampson Jacques, figuring as a go-between. In carrying it out, he was insistent that there should be “ no fuss ” or unwelcome publicity ; and he himself, after his previous meeting with her, was so anxious to avoid recognition by Eliza that he shaved off his beard and moustache.

“ Don’t say anything to the police about this,” he urged the mother. “ Don’t say anything to anybody.”

Mrs. Armstrong, however, said a good deal. She said such a lot that the “ Chief Director ” (as Stead called himself all through the business) felt distinctly hurt and made a pronouncement on the subject at a meeting in St. James’s Hall.

“ I accept full responsibility,” he told his hearers, “ for taking Eliza Armstrong from her mother’s custody. I took the child from a place that was steeped in vice,

and from a mother who admitted that she was going to send the girl to a brothel. If the father and mother had not made all this hubbub, but had come to me, I could have settled the whole thing in five minutes."

An odd—not to say, high handed—attitude to adopt with other people's children. Still, the gathering (with the exception of one man who had got in without a ticket, and was removed by indignant stewards for questioning the propriety of such a course) applauded lustily.

The next thing that happened was the issue of a warrant for the extradition of Rebecca Jarrett. She was thought to be still in France, but she was really in London. On the advice of Bramwell Booth, she surrendered to the police. As soon as he heard of this, Stead, who was holiday-making abroad, telegraphed from Grindelwald: "I alone am responsible. Rebecca Jarrett was only my unwilling agent. I am returning by the first express, to claim responsibility for the alleged abduction, and to demand, if condemned, the sole punishment."

The hands of the authorities were thus forced. Stead had challenged them to prosecute him. Now they obliged him; and, on his return from Switzerland, he was duly arrested. The warrant granted by the magistrate also included his principal assistants. These were, in addition to Rebecca Jarrett, Louise Mourez (the procuress who had examined Eliza Armstrong), a Madame Combe (who had taken her to Paris), and Bramwell Booth and Sampson Jacques. On September 7 they appeared in the dock at Bow Street. The charge against all of them was that of "conspiring by force and fraud to take a girl of thirteen, Eliza Armstrong, out of the custody of her parents, and causing

to be committed an indecent assault ;” and Rebecca Jarrett, Stead, and Jacques were further charged with “administering a noxious drug, with intent to grieve and annoy the said Eliza Armstrong.” The prosecution, conducted by the Treasury, was entrusted to Mr. Poland. Rebecca Jarrett was defended by Charles Russell, Q.C. ; and Stead, as was his custom, defended himself. As is apt to be the case when this course is adopted he did not have a very good client. Thus, he began by making a speech that was so long and discursive (it filled thirty columns when subsequently printed) that the magistrate had to tell him more than once he was not addressing a jury.

“I am charged with conspiracy,” he declared. “What I did was to expose a conspiracy of vice and crime by means of a combination with the friends of law and virtue.” This, he held to be an adequate answer to the charge of abduction. Thinking, however, that perhaps something more would be wanted, he explained that he had taken Eliza Armstrong to Paris, and kept her there from June 3 to August 24, “to remove her from the influence of a drunken mother who had sold her daughter for shame.” The fact that he had never seen Mrs. Armstrong nor spoken a word to her was, apparently, immaterial.

Eliza Armstrong repeated the story that had already been made public ; and added that, while in Paris, she had been employed to sell the *War Cry*. Her mother, who followed her in the box, was severely handled by Charles Russell. He did not get quite the best of it ; and an attempt to discredit her, on the grounds that she sometimes took too much to drink, met with an indignant remonstrance.

“Me drink !” she exclaimed. “Why, I live next door to a teetotaller.”

Despite this, Mrs. Armstrong's record, it appeared, was not entirely spotless. She had been "in trouble" more than once, and had been fined for assault and using "strong language."

"That was all because of my sister-in-law," she explained. "I would do it again if she pulled my hair. So would you. When I'm upset, I swear a good bit. And now, I'm not going to answer any more of your questions."

Altogether, a difficult witness to handle.

Nor was she well disposed towards Mrs. Broughton. She even went so far as to call her a "bloody cow," or, as a shocked reporter put it, "an opprobrious name." She had not consulted her husband about letting the child go with Rebecca Jarrett. This caused a domestic upheaval, for Mr. Armstrong, who had served in the Militia as a corporal, was a martinet with strong views on discipline. The result was, when, on returning from the Derby, he discovered that the girl had gone without his knowledge, he gave his wife a black eye.

Another of Mrs. Armstrong's grievances was that the Salvation Army had told her that if she wanted her daughter back she must pay them £100. This, however, was denied by Bramwell Booth ; and on behalf of himself and Madame Combe, it was urged that they had both acted in a "thoroughly Christian spirit and with a genuine desire to help Eliza Armstrong." There was also some glib talk indulged in by learned counsel as to the "possibility of a technical breach of the law" having been committed by the other defendants. Mr. Vaughan, the magistrate, however, did not accept this view ; and, after hearing a number of girls, who said they had been "approached" by Rebecca Jarrett, he decided to send all the accused for trial. "There may,"



"BLACK MARIA" AT BOW STREET
Conveying prisoners for trial.

he observed, in giving this decision, “have been a motive in Mr. Stead’s mind to assemble material for the nauseous and deplorable article which was published by him, but the law cannot be broken for the gratification of any motive, no matter how good.”

The suffrages of the public were not entirely with Mr. Stead and his companions. “After the magisterial hearing,” says a newspaper report, “the defendants had considerable difficulty in leaving the building. They were hooted and yelled at by a disorderly assembly, and, one of them, Mr. Bramwell Booth, was literally mobbed. He received a severe blow on the nose, and lost his hat, and eventually had to take refuge in the police station.”

“Every blackguard in London,” wrote Bramwell Booth, “must have assembled in Bow Street while the case was before the magistrate. From every foul den in the metropolis the people had come to gloat on the discomfiture of these modern Galahads. I was mobbed more than once, dragged out of a cab and maltreated, and only rescued with difficulty by a police inspector. On more than one occasion the police placed a ‘Black Maria’ at our disposal, and we were rapidly conveyed from the Court to some distant square, where cabs could be procured for us.”

A passing reference to the business at Bow Street also occurs in *The Life of Catherine Booth* :

“‘The Armstrong case will crush the Salvation Army,’ pronounced a titled celebrity who was favoured with a seat upon the Bench. Indeed, those who were supposed to know unhesitatingly declared that the proceedings were aimed as much at the Salvation Army as at the neo-journalism with which Mr. Stead’s name was identified.”

The "titled celebrity" proved a false (and, doubtless, disappointed) prophet. General Booth and his followers were not "crushed." If anything, their position was strengthened by these curious happenings.

During the interval before the trial, Stead set to work and issued a pamphlet consisting of a verbatim report of the proceedings so far as they had gone. As it ran to nearly one hundred pages and contained the suppressed passages of the speech he had wanted to deliver, and only cost sixpence, it enjoyed a large sale. This, like a reprint of "The Maiden Tribute," also had the questionable honour of being pirated, and thousands of spurious copies were hawked about the streets on barrows.

5

It was on October 23 that the trial, which lasted for thirteen days, began at the Old Bailey, before Mr. Justice Lopes. The prosecution was conducted by the Attorney-General (Sir Richard Webster), and all the defendants pleaded not guilty. As at Bow Street, Stead was his own counsel ; and the Archbishop of Canterbury and Cardinal Manning were, among others, subpoenaed by him "to prove the purity of my motives." But this was a figure of speech, for such a quality in them had not been seriously questioned. It was their legality, not their "purity," that concerned the law officers. Apart, too, from this consideration, neither of these witnesses afforded any real help. The Archbishop had nothing to say ; and the Cardinal had a cold, and did not attend.

Few people are at their best in the witness-box. Rebecca Jarrett was at her worst. Shaken and unnerved and brow-beaten and bullied in Buzfuz fashion by the Attorney-General, she lost her head. "You forced that

lie out of me,” she exclaimed bitterly, when she was tripped up and had to withdraw something. “You make people tell lies!” Much had been hoped from her evidence. But, under a severe cross-examination, she proved a sad disappointment, for she flatly contradicted her employer’s account of the transaction between them. She had not told him, she asserted, that Mrs. Armstrong had knowingly parted with her daughter for immoral purposes and on payment of £5, and that the father knew of this.

In the questions he was allowed to put, Stead was given considerable latitude. He took such advantage of it that more than once the judge had to keep him to the point.

“We are not,” he was told, “concerned with discovering if girls can be bought by vicious men, but if you have abducted this particular girl, Eliza Armstrong.”

His lordship also wanted information on another subject.

“What is the *War Cry*?” he enquired, when this journal was mentioned.

“I understand that it is the name of a paper belonging to the Salvation Army,” announced a junior to whom the Attorney-General appealed for expert knowledge.

Stead, when it came to his turn, was asked what he had to say. He had a great deal to say; and his address to the jury filled fifty pages of a pamphlet that he afterwards issued. As was confidently expected, he took all the blame to himself for the position of his fellow defendants. “I admit my responsibility,” he announced, “and do not wish in any way to minimise it. But my action,” he added, “was no mere lark, set on foot by a reckless adventurer; nor was it a mere

speculation got up by a man who only wanted to sell his paper. On the contrary, it was a serious object, with a high moral and humanitarian end in view."

"I wish," interrupted the judge, "to give you all reasonable latitude, but you must clearly understand that motive has nothing whatever to do with the offence alleged in this indictment. Nor have the jury anything to do with motive"; and, "This is very irregular," he observed at another point, when Stead commented on an answer made by a witness. "It appears to me that you have tried to be irregular all through these proceedings."

"I regret the remark," was the apologetic response, "but I made it because everyone who has helped me has got into trouble."

To account for certain rash charges he had advanced while preparing his "Maiden Tribute" disclosures, Stead had an "explanation" to offer. It was one that threw a curious light on the manifold difficulties besetting the path of a reformer. "During the period I was wandering among these miserable haunts of sin," he told the jury, "I underwent a tremendous physical strain. I had little sleep. I was drinking, too, although I was not accustomed to alcohol; and too much champagne is a thing to be avoided by a teetotaler. Then I also had to smoke, and I had never smoked before."

Rebecca Jarrett had proved a weak reed and had denied him in the witness-box. But Stead bore no malice. "I was very hard upon her," he declared. "Much too hard. I insisted that she should help me. I was as ruthless as death. I still believe in Rebecca Jarrett, even if I do not still believe in her memory." He also had a word to say for Sampson Jacques, and

several words for Bramwell Booth. The only one of his colleagues for whom he did not appear to have anything to say was Madame Mourez.

With regard to his own conduct, he protested that this was “ justified by the results ; ” and, from his own point of view, perhaps, he advanced a very fair case. But all the casuistry in the world could not get over the wrong that had been done. Apart, too, from the false pretences and subterfuges of his agents, there was the fact that he had deliberately abducted Eliza Armstrong ; that he had subjected her to a disgusting physical examination ; that he had taken her out of the custody of her parents, and without their knowledge or sanction ; that he had refused to return her to them until the police had interfered ; and that he had suppressed a letter the girl had written to her mother from Paris. Yet in all this he could see nothing to merit adverse criticism. “ It was because of the row that was kicked up,” he naïvely observed, “ that I told Bramwell Booth it would be a good plan to bring the child back to England and keep her within deliverable distance of her mother. I did say in the *Pall Mall Gazette* that I could personally vouch for the absolute accuracy of the narrative given there. Of course, what I meant was that I believed my agents could do so.”

Bramwell Booth has, in his *Echoes and Memories*, left an interesting account of the happenings at the Old Bailey :

“ At times during the hearing the Court was very subdued, the common hush almost suggesting a religious solemnity ; at other times there was outburst and clamour. On the whole we were treated with consideration. Everything that could be unpleasant was dispensed with, except the necessary

formality of locking us up for a few minutes in the cells each morning before we entered the dock. I had the 'condemned cell,' not, I am sure, because of its associations, but because it was the most commodious. The warders were very civil; the police quite nice; and all the time we were sustained by a current of friendliness, if not of sympathy, even on the part of some who were against us."

Learned counsel did their best for the other defendants, and much rhetoric was expended on behalf of them. Charles Russell, for Rebecca Jarrett, submitted that there had been no real abduction; and Henry Matthews, Q.C. nearly shed tears when he depicted Jacques as "a subordinate in a holy cause." But, except to secure the release of Madame Combe and Bramwell Booth (against whom the Attorney-General entered a *nolle prosequi*), these declamatory flourishes served no purpose.

"The defendants, Jarrett, Jacques, and Booth," began Mr. Justice Lopes, in a long and careful summing up, "have had the benefit of the strength of the English Bar. Speeches have been made to you, members of the jury, remarkable for their power, their vigour, and their eloquence. Mr. Stead has defended himself. I think you will agree with me that he has not suffered on that account. Although I was unable to agree with many of his observations, I cannot but admire the ability with which he delivered that address. . . . I would warn you not to be prejudiced against Stead because, some months ago, in our streets and throughout our provinces there were circulated—emanating from the *Pall Mall Gazette* offices—an amount of disgusting and filthy articles. Much as we must all deprecate the publication of these filthy and obscene articles, I desire to impress upon you that you are not trying Stead in connection with anything of that kind. You are trying him on



Bassano Ltd.

MR. JUSTICE LOPES
Judge who sentenced: W. T. Stead.

an entirely different and distinct charge, namely, the abduction of Eliza Armstrong."

The principal question left to the jury was, "Did Stead and Jarret, or either of them, take Eliza Armstrong out of the custody of, and against the will of, her father?" The jury took three hours to find that they had done so.

"We do not think," announced the foreman, "that Mr. Stead had the consent of the father for the use to which he put the child, and we think that he was misled by Jarrett. We wish to add a recommendation. It is that the jury trust the Government will secure the efficient administration of the Act that has recently been passed for the protection of young girls."

"I quite agree with you," returned the judge.

"We also feel," continued the foreman, thus encouraged, "that Mr. Stead acted from the purest of motives, and we trust that this circumstance will have your consideration."

"In any course which I may adopt," was the response, "your recommendation will be considered."

Notwithstanding all this, Stead's opinion of Mr. Justice Lopes's attitude was unflattering. "His animus," he declared, "was undisguised." Still, he did not quarrel with the verdict. "It was," he admitted, "inevitable;" and when he learned that the foreman of the jury had apologised to his wife, he wrote to her: "Tell him not to grieve. If I had been in his place, I should have done as he did."

Madame Combe and Bramwell Booth having been discharged, a fresh jury was empanelled, and a second indictment of indecent assault was preferred against Madame Mourez and the other three defendants. This did not take long to dispose of, for none of them had anything to say, except Jacques. After indulging

in a great deal of rhodomontade and fustian about his "important public services," he finished up a long speech by declaring that "If Divine Providence should think fit to allot me a fate similar to that reserved for my friend Mr. Stead, I shall accept it as a heavenly gift."

6

Stead himself contributed to the columns of a Boston organ a picturesque (if somewhat overdrawn) account of the final scene :

"The jury were absent for a considerable time, and the crowded court buzzed with eager conversation, as everybody canvassed the possible verdict with his neighbour. I think that I was about the most unconcerned person there. . . . Our friends, legal and otherwise, were crowded round the dock, confidently expressing their belief in our acquittal. Suddenly, there was a thrilling whisper : 'They are coming, they are coming !' Everyone hushed his talk. Those who had seats sat down ; those who crowded the corridor craned their necks towards the jury-box. The twelve 'good men and true,' headed by their foreman, filed back into the box. Then the Judge, amid a profound silence as of death, asked if they had agreed upon their verdict. 'We have,' said the foreman. Everyone held his breath, and waited to hear the next fateful words."

What the "fateful words" amounted to was a verdict of guilty against each of the defendants. Where, however, Stead was concerned, the jury added a rider. "We wish," they announced through their foreman, "to put on record our high appreciation of the services he has rendered the nation by securing the passage of a much needed law for the protection of young girls." Thus, he, at any rate, had a measure of balm accorded him.

Only one thing was left to be done, viz. for Mr. Justice Lopes to pronounce sentence. This he did with becoming solemnity.

“William Thomas Stead. You have been found guilty under two charges, one of abducting Eliza Armstrong, and the other of an indecent assault. I am prepared to credit you with good motives from your point of view. At the same time, however, I cannot disguise from my mind that you have acted recklessly throughout, and against the advice of all you consulted ; and, believing in the existence of the most horrible depravity, it appears to me that you made statements about it which, when challenged, you were unable to verify. . . . I regret to say that you thought fit to publish in the *Pall Mall Gazette* a distorted account of the case of Eliza Armstrong ; and that you deluged some months ago our streets and the whole country with an amount of filth which has, I fear, tainted the minds of the children you were so anxious to protect, and which has been (and I do not hesitate to say ever will be) a disgrace to journalism. An irreparable injury has been done to the parents of this child. They have been subjected to the unutterable scandal and ignominy of having sold their child for violation. The child herself has been dragged through the dirt, examined by a woman who certainly bears, or in your own opinion bore, a vile character. She was subjected to chloroform, taken to a brothel, and then sent to France. Her letters to her mother were suppressed ; and her return was refused when demanded. All this has been done by you, relying upon the statement of a woman whose character you knew, and whom you entrusted with money to bribe the parents to commit the greatest sin they could commit, namely, to sell their own child for immoral purposes . . . I am willing, as far as I possibly can, to give you credit for any good motive you may have had, and I am willing to give effect to the recommendation of the

jury. But I cannot forget that you are an educated man, who should have known that the law cannot be broken to promote any supposed good, and that the sanctity of private life cannot be invaded for the furtherance of the views of an individual who believes that the end justifies the means. I have, accordingly and after much anxiety, come to the conclusion that I must pass a substantial sentence. This is that you be imprisoned without hard labour for three calendar months."

Where, however, the other defendants were concerned, the learned judge could find nothing creditable in their conduct ; and Rebecca Jarrett and Madame Mourez were each sent to prison for six months, and Sampson Jacques for one month.

7

These last individuals were such comparatively minor members of the cast that nobody thought very much about them. With regard, however, to Stead, the case was different. He was still in the limelight. Not unnaturally, his friends were determined that he should stop there.

Without any time being lost, a public meeting was held at Exeter Hall, "where prayers were offered up for Mr. Stead, Mr. Jacques, and Rebecca Jarrett" (but none, apparently, for Madame Mourez). A deputation then marched to the Home Office, "to protest against Mr. Stead being treated as a felon." They met, however, with scant sympathy there, for, "on the grounds that it was contrary to the rules of the Department to receive deputations referring to particular criminals," an Under-Secretary insisted that the visitors should retire. "The members," adds a report, "complained that they had been grossly insulted, and further

prayers were offered up when they returned to Exeter Hall.”

“The news of his conviction and sentence,” says Miss Estelle Stead (in her filial memoir, *My Father*), “struck like setting a match to gunpowder. The effect was instantaneous, explosive, seeming to liberate the pent-up horror that had gripped the whole country while the deadly drama was slowly being unfolded.”

It scarcely did this. Still, it was undoubtedly responsible for a great deal of public excitement. Telegrams of protest and strongly worded petitions for pardon descended like an avalanche upon the Queen, the Cabinet, and the Home Secretary. Nor was the Church dumb. “From the pulpit, the voice of Canon Wilberforce gave expression to the indignation of noble manhood. He declared that the majority of the violent abuse which has been showered upon the head of the revealer of the Apocalypse of Evil had come from the frivolous, the worldly, the self-pleasing, who have so exhausted their vocabulary in abuse of the *Pall Mall Gazette* that they appear not to have a curse to spare for the defilers of the Holy Ghost.”

The views of the canon were echoed by a prebendary. But the championship of this second cleric was a less effective one, as, not long afterwards, he left England. What was wanted were advocates on the spot, not at the other side of the world.

A pamphlet, *From the Old Bailey to the High Court of Public Opinion*, was issued by the “Social Purity Bureau.” This showed that the “Chief Director” had staunch admirers in the provincial Press. “The public of this country who look matters straight in the face,” declared the *Newcastle Daily Leader*, “will hear with a feeling of shame and outrage that Mr. Stead has been sentenced

to undergo three months' imprisonment." A still warmer champion was the *Bristol Mercury*. "Mr. Stead," asserted a fiery columnist, "can afford to treat with contempt the interested howls of the London editors who, while shedding crocodile's tears over the wrongs of Eliza Armstrong, have done their utmost to blast the reputation of a journalist, the latchet of whose shoes they are hardly worthy to unloose." The *Methodist Times* was similarly emphatic. "Mr. Stead," it announced, "goes to prison with a light heart, amid the execrations of the London Press which has outdone itself in a spite so malignant as to lead to a suspicion of sympathy with vice."

The "interested howls of the London editors" (as heard in Newcastle and Bristol) were certainly vociferous. The *Standard*, for example, led off with the following :

"As we read the address of the judge, in which Mr. Stead's offence is made to stand out plainly in its almost cynical recklessness, divested of all moral disguises, the wonder grows that it should ever have been possible for a moment to conceal such atrocious proceedings under the mask of a holy purpose, or to enlist such infamies in the ostensible service of virtue. The mere recital of the abominations prompted and carried through by the principal defendant almost suggests a doubt whether anything short of monomania can have led to the idea that such a sacrifice of all that was right and true and virtuous in the lives of so many people was really demanded as the price to be paid for a victory over vice."

The *Morning Advertiser*, a journal conducted in the interests of the "licensed trade," voiced the opinion of Bung. It was not complimentary :

“To those who are strongly sensible to the mischief done to the minds and morals of the English youth by Stead, Jacques, and their accomplices, and who realise what a blow has been struck at that primal palladium of our liberties—the unwritten law that an Englishman’s house is his castle, and who estimate justly the foul wrong done to an individual in the person of the child Armstrong—the sentences passed by the judge will seem all too light. The pruriency of this pernicious plot has only been equalled by its sanctimoniousness.”

It was left, however, for a couple of evening papers—the *St. James’s Gazette* and the *Echo*—to question in set terms the chief actor’s sobriety and disinterestedness.

“Mr. Stead,” remarked the former, “was probably intoxicated when he took into his mind certain details worked into this story. There was no truth in it ; and nobody was better aware of this than the man who arranged and carried out a most cruel imposture ;” and the latter declared : “No sympathy is due to the man ‘who kept with virtue the accounts of trade,’ and who, with one eye on the children, had the other on his ledger.”

Stead himself appeared serenely indifferent to the hubbub aroused by his trial. Perhaps it was his philosophy that came to his aid ; perhaps it was his invincible belief that his conduct all through had been beyond reproach. Whatever the responsible factor, he sat down and wrote an article in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, disclaiming any suggestion that he felt injured :

“I have had a fair trial, a full hearing, and, on the evidence before the Court, a just verdict. No judge could have been more patient or courteous than Mr. Justice Lopes ; no prosecuting counsel more gentlemanly than the Attorney-General ; and no jury more attentive and intelligent than the twelve men who

returned an adverse verdict against Jarrett and myself on Saturday night. From the decision so pronounced I have not even a desire to appeal, either to the mercy of the judge or to the tribunal of public opinion."

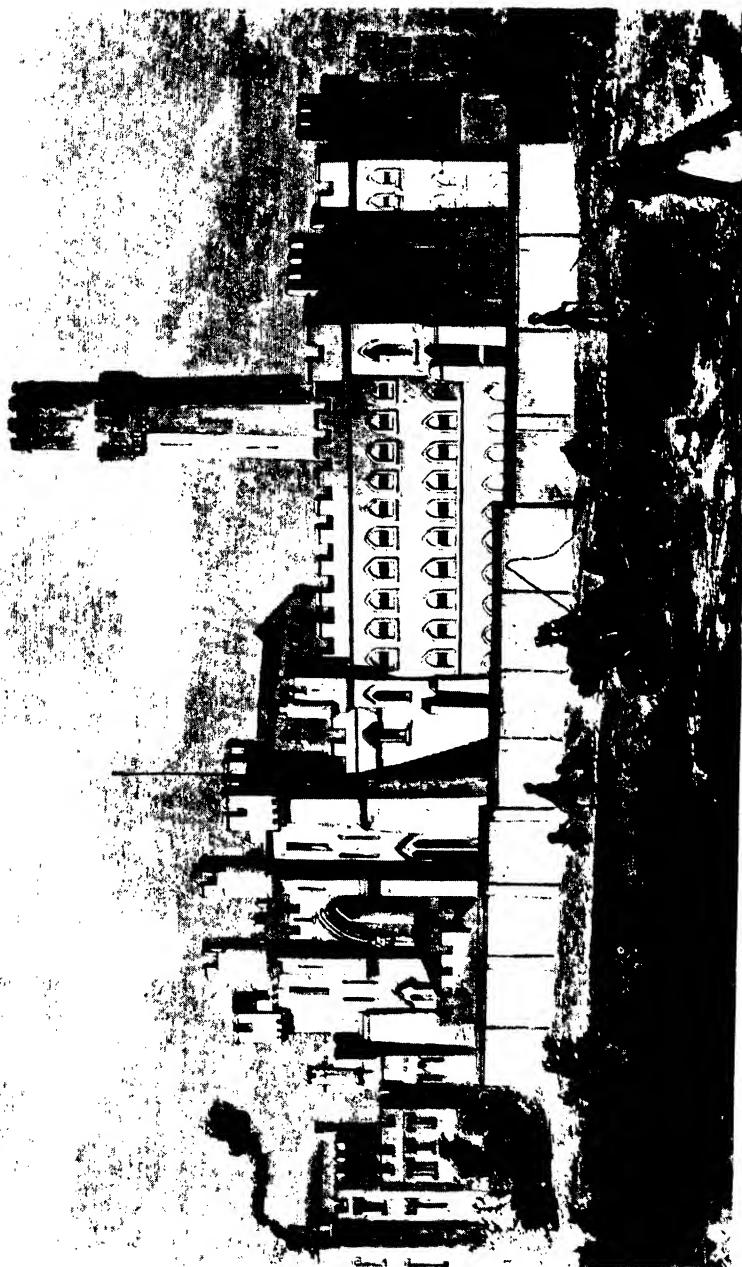
These views were not echoed by everyone. Mrs. Josephine Butler, a woman who had the cause of all women very much at heart, considered, and with good reason, that they might have been put differently.

"William Stead," she wrote, "worn out and ill, has written in a moment of depression, words which I regret in his farewell leader in the *Pall Mall Gazette*. He speaks of having had a fair trial ; compliments the prosecution ; confesses himself to have been to blame ; and hopes that nothing will be done to reverse the sentence. Against some of these expressions the country will loyally protest, though we shall readily forgive our brave and beloved friend for having fallen momentarily into such a tone. Perhaps Mr. Stead may think that he himself was courteously treated ; but what of the courtesy or even decent fairness shown in regard to Rebecca, upon whom the utmost of vituperation permissible in a Court of Law was vented ? "

The Attorney-General had suggested that Mrs. Butler was "soft-hearted" and would "believe anything told her by a woman posing as a repentant Magdalen." Mrs. Butler was certainly soft-hearted, but she was neither soft-headed nor credulous. On the contrary, she was a woman of high intelligence and accustomed to dealing with the type of which Rebecca Jarrett was a member. "An expert of experts," Stead himself had called her.

Although Rebecca Jarrett had broken down in the witness-box at the critical moment and failed Stead, Mrs. Butler could yet make allowances. She made full

HOLLOWAY PRISON



measure of them ; and with fine charity she stood up for her *protégée* and championed her when everybody else was pointing the finger of scorn. This woman's situation was certainly pathetic, for she had been made the residuary legatee, so to speak, of the errors and reckless actions of the other defendants. “She was,” says Mrs. Butler, “put in an exceptionally difficult position for a person of her poor education and miserable antecedents.”

Rebecca Jarrett had never had very much chance. From the start, things had been against her. Thus, her parents were poor, but dishonest, and her father was also a drunkard. When a girl of fifteen, and earning her living as a domestic servant, she had been “taken advantage of by a gentleman,” or, as Mrs. Butler puts it, “led away from the path of virtue.” She travelled some distance along it. In fact, she did so several times, for she became the mother of two children ; and afterwards opened a brothel in Manchester, “carrying on a sinful career and giving way to drink.” Deserted by a second man with whom she formed a temporary union, she next became a procuress. It was through the joint efforts of Mrs. Butler and Mrs. Booth that she was eventually persuaded to abandon these activities and devote herself to “reclamation work.”

8

The Court having risen, Stead and Jacques were taken to Newgate. “There,” he says, “we met poor Rebecca, who was in high spirits, and Madame Mourez, whose indignation on being removed after sentence was almost ungovernable.” Nor did Jacques appear to regard the term allotted him as the “heavenly gift” about which he had been so glib in the dock.

Stead's prison experience began with a sojourn at Coldbath Fields, a gloomy Bastille now long since demolished. There he had an encounter with the chaplain, who introduced himself by enquiring, "Don't you think you have got off very cheap?" Stead has recorded his opinion of this member of the staff as "the only creature whom I met among all those to whose care, spiritual and temporal, I was entrusted who ever said an unkind word." Still, the chaplain saw to it that his cell was furnished with a copy of Dean Vaughan's *Consolation for the Sorrowful*. It was, however, wasted on him, as he was anything but "sorrowful." Nor did he look upon his imprisonment as a martyrdom. On the contrary, he found in it "cause for pride and exultation . . . It was a great experience, and one which I would not have missed for anything."

By the way, after his conviction had been secured, a circumstance was discovered that, had it been brought out at the trial, would have absolved him on technical grounds. This was that, since the mother of Eliza Armstrong had not gone through the formality of obtaining her "marriage lines," the father had no legal rights in their joint offspring; and the fact that he had not been a consenting party to the abduction of his daughter would then have been immaterial. Although he had a pretty shrewd idea that Mrs. Armstrong had assumed brevet rank, Stead purposely forebore to have a question put on the subject. It was the better part. "I have never ceased to be grateful," he wrote, "that the fact was not discovered till afterwards. If I had asked that question, I should probably have been acquitted, and so have lost that experience in prison which was one of the most valuable lessons of my life."

Stead's durance at Coldbath Fields was not prolonged,

as, after three days, strings were pulled in the proper direction (one by Mrs. Garrett Fawcett, who wrote to the Queen) and he was removed to Holloway Prison as a “first-class misdemeanant.” He arrived there in a cab. No Black Maria ; no handcuffs. But this was not his doing, for he would probably have preferred them.

The privileges of being a first-class misdemeanant included daily visits from friends. There were many such visits. One of them was from his old editor, who had since become Lord Morley. He found Stead “in a strangely exalted mood.” This was obviously the case, for Morley adds that he told him he regarded himself as “the man of most importance now alive.”

If the stone walls of Holloway made a prison, and the iron bars a cage, it was not a very irksome one where Stead was concerned. “I am here,” he wrote, “in the pleasantest little room imaginable, with a snug arm-chair and a blazing fire, and the walls all gay with Christmas cards and evergreens, and the cupboard full of Christmas cheer ; and, what is far more, my heart full of joy and peace, goodwill to all men, including Mr. Justice Lopes.”

In another passage he became almost lyrical :

“Never had I a pleasanter holiday, a more charming season of repose. . . . Here, as in an enchanted castle, jealously guarded by liveried retainers, I was kept secure from the strife of tongues and afforded the rare luxury of journalistic leisure. From the governor, Colonel Milman, to the poor fellow who scrubbed out my room, everybody was kind as kind could be. From all parts of the Empire, even from distant Fiji, rained down upon me every morning the benedictions of men and women who had felt in the midst of their lifelong labours for the outcast the

unexpected lift of the greater outburst of compassion and indignation which followed the publication of 'The Maiden Tribute.' I had papers, books, letters, flowers, everything that heart could wish. . . . I do not think that I have ever been in better spirits in my life, or enjoyed existence more intently than in these two months. So far as I could, I let all my friends know how jolly I was, and how entirely the prayers of my kind supporters had been answered, so far as my inward peace and joy were concerned.

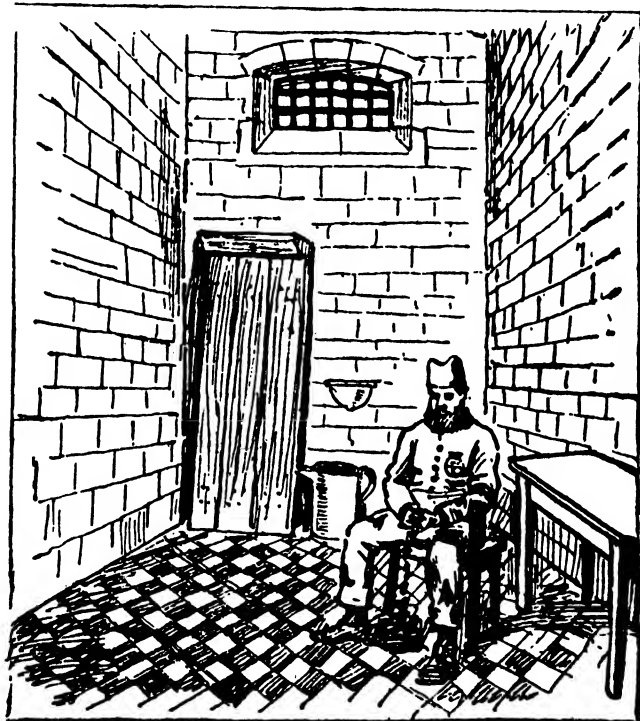
. . . When at last the time came to leave, I was quite melancholy at the prospect. . . . From the day I received notice that, in consideration of certain circumstances not specified (but not very difficult to imagine) her Majesty had been pleased to grant me a pardon conditional on my conforming to the rules and regulations laid down for the guidance of a misdemeanant of the first division, my position was almost ideal. My only regret was that I could not share some of the gladness and peace which made hard work restful with those who were left in the hurly-burly outside. I have ever been the spoiled child of fortune ; but never had I a happier lot than the two months I spent in Happy Holloway."

Making every allowance for the hyperbole of which he was so fond, the fact remains that Stead's imprisonment was little less than farcical. At any rate, the normal regime was softened to vanishing point ; and the plank bed, oakum-picking, broad arrows, and skilly allotted his fellow-defendants were all agreeably absent.

"I had," he writes, "my own little kettle and made my own tea ; fresh eggs were sent me by some unknown benefactor, and anything in the shape of food was ordered from outside. Instead of planks, I had a comfortable bed. I was allowed my own hearthrug and easy chair, as well as a writing-desk and a cosy little tea table."

MY FIRST IMPRISONMENT.

By W. T. STEAD.



E. MARLBOROUGH & CO., 51, OLD BAILEY, E.C.

PRICE THREEPENCE.

PRISON PAMPHLET BY W. T. STEAD
"Hard labour" at Holloway.

None of these amenities, however, was extended to Rebecca Jarrett or Madame Mourez in Millbank. Also, they had to stop there for six months.

9

“Mr. Stead will come forth from gaol a hero,” declared a provincial organ. If he did not quite do this, he certainly returned with fresh effulgence to the helm of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, which, on an assurance being given that there should be “no more virgins” in its columns, returned to the bookstalls. Louise Mourez did not return anywhere, as she died in prison before her sentence was completed. Under the shelter of Mrs. Butler, Rebecca Jarrett went back to the Salvation Army, and Sampson Jacques to Fleet Street. As for Eliza Armstrong, she was none the worse for her misadventures. At any rate, in course of time, she married a “respectable mechanic” and became the “proud and happy mother of a family of six.”

The long continued opposition and obstruction died down; and, although “Tribute” was still levied in certain quarters, the activities of the “Minotaur” were severely restricted, and the Criminal Law Amendment Act duly came into being. Whether Stead’s temporary sojourn behind prison bars was responsible for this, or not, is rather a vexed point. Also, it is not a very important one. He himself, however, had no doubts on the subject. “The Ministry,” he declared in a joyful pæan, “capitulated to the storm of popular passion. The Bill, which they had abandoned as hopeless, they revived and strengthened and passed

into law with the utmost celerity and despatch. It was one of the greatest achievements which any journalist single-handed had accomplished in the coercion of an unwilling legislature and a reluctant Ministry."

It may be left at that.

POETRY AND PASSION

Poetry and Passion

I

IN the days of our grandfathers, and for a lustrum to follow, few names among Bohemian circles were better known than that of Adah Isaacs Menken. Its bearer had a number of special claims to the distinction. One was that she was credited with having had a "love affair" with Swinburne; another was that she was said to have had seven husbands (including Heenan, the pugilist, whose "mill" with Tom Sayers was still being discussed); and yet another was that, as an actress more scantily garbed than any of her competitors, she had shocked and captured all London by her performance in *Mazeppa* at Astley's. She had also, on the strength of reams of verse contributed to obscure American papers, sought recognition as a poet. But in this last direction she had registered failure, for her Muse was little above the Christmas-cracker standard.

It was during the summer of 1864 that—after a series of sensational triumphs in America—Adah Isaacs Menken landed in England. One trunk (of small size) contained her "Mazeppa" costume; and in a second was the manuscript of her precious "poems." A preliminary paragraph had heralded her coming:

"Miss Adah Isaacs Menken, who is leaving our shores, will astonish John Bull and Co. in the country where Good Queen Vic is at the head of affairs. The lovely Menken will doubtless be the cause of many duels among her masculine admirers in the British metropolis."

The new arrival's ambition had been to make her London début at Drury Lane. This, however, was easier said than done, for the "Press notices" with

which she bombarded them had little effect on the authorities there. Still, she did get into touch with the directors, and terms were actually discussed. But she wanted so much more than they were willing to offer that the preliminary overtures came to nothing. Edward Stirling, the stage-manager, however, interested himself so far on her behalf as to write to E. T. Smith, at that period the lessee of Astley's, suggesting that she would probably suit his special public.

The response was not exactly cordial :

“ DEAR STIRLING,

“ Thanks. Menken can go to Drury Lane or to the devil. She won't do for me. She was kicked out of America.

E. T. SMITH.”

This was very far from being the case. As a matter of fact, Adah Isaacs Menken had, bestriding the “ Wild Horse of Tartary ” in the rôle of “ Mazeppa,” swept the theatrical world of America as it had never yet been swept. She could have stopped there indefinitely, amassing dollars and distinction, had she not set her heart on securing a London *réclame*.

A remarkable personality, this Edward Tyrell Smith, and (if not distinguished as a polite letter-writer) always a flamboyant figure of fun. His origin was mysterious. According to one account (which he was careful not to contradict) his father was an admiral, and he himself had been a midshipman. A life on the ocean wave, however, having no attraction for him, he had, after his first voyage, stopped on shore. There he took up another career. Several careers, as it happened, since he became in turn a policeman, a publican, the proprietor of a night-house, a newspaper editor, an unsuccessful candidate for Parliament, and



ADAH ISAACS MENKEN

"Gleanings in Europe, Vol. II."

a theatrical manager. Hence, it is not altogether astonishing that such widely spread activities should have inspired a bard to a lyrical apostrophe :

“ Awake, my muse, with fervour and with pith,
To sing the praise of Lessee Edward Smith ! ”

Despite the unflattering opinion he had expressed concerning her capacity as a “ draw,” Manager Smith, after one interview with her, altered his mind about engaging Miss Menken. His theatre happened to be empty at the moment ; and he felt that a “ Female Mazeppa ” would, after all, serve well enough as a stopgap, and might, with average luck, even last until it should be ousted by the Christmas pantomime. Accordingly, he offered her the chance of appearing at Astley’s. It turned out a good stroke of business for him, although she demanded a salary that he dubbed “ wicked.” Whether this, or not, it was certainly a stiff one, for the new-comer was untroubled by any modesty-complex. “ The management of the Theatre Royal, Astley’s,” declared a chronicler, “ have had to guarantee Miss Menken one-half of the nightly receipts during the run of *Mazeppa*, together with the cost of her grooms and equestrian directors ; to place a stage-box and well-appointed dressing-room at her disposal ; to engage a full company to support her ; and to mount the piece with a perfection of detail worthy of the theatre and the artiste.”

“ Mind you get yourself talked about,” were Mr. Smith’s parting words, as he put his signature to the contract. “ Do everything you can to get your name in the papers. It’s important.”

“ I’ll remember,” she returned. “ You can leave it to me.”

It was obvious that something could be done in this direction, for a "personal paragraph" soon found its way into the gossip columns :

"Miss Adah Isaacs Menken, the popular young American actress, is now in London. Every fine afternoon she appears among the aristocracy in Hyde Park, either mounted on her famous black mare and escorted by a groom, or else driving in an open carriage, with a liveried coachman and footman complete. Her equipage is much admired by the fashionables."

"The public," wrote a second chronicler, "watch her day after day, driving up the Mall with her team of ponies. Duchesses, even if they are young and beautiful, pass unnoticed when La Belle Menken is in sight. Apparently impassive, and casting glances at no one, except the little 'tiger' behind her, she sweeps along the Mall, the 'observed of all observers.'"

The manager of Astley's was a great believer in "publicity"; and no reporter ever left him without a bulging notebook, in which would be material for a score of paragraphs. A typical one that was served up by them ran as follows :

"We have it on good authority, that Mr. E. T. Smith is putting on *Mazeppa* in novel and brilliant style. Thus, instead of the hero being impersonated in the customary fashion by an actor, he has secured a beautiful young woman from America, Miss Adah Isaacs Menken, to embody this rôle. A skilful and daring equestrienne, she does all the perilous runs without a 'double,' and exhibits prodigious pluck and energy in the management of her mettlesome steed."

The version of *Mazeppa* in which the American star was to appear at Astley's was one that had been prepared

by Henry Milner. This purported to be "adapted from Lord Byron's famous poem." It bore, however, small resemblance to that work. But Mr. Milner had his reasons for departing from the original, and was quite ready to make them known. "In proportion," he says in a smug preface, "as we admire exalted genius, we lament its wanton prostitution; and the mass of obscenity and profaneness which his lordship has bequeathed to posterity has now become a question between himself and his Creator."

Circumspect Mr. Milner, for whom it was also a problem, would have none of this. His business was to fashion a melodrama which "while holding the attention of all, would not bring a blush to the cheek of modesty." He was thus compelled to wield the pruning-knife with vigour. Still, he left in full measure of "gorgeous processions, banquets and tournaments, gallant squires, dashing lovers and ladies fair, with fierce warriors and real horses."

Under the circumstances, perhaps it was as well that Byron was dead long before his "adapter" appeared on the scene.

As a showman, the astute Mr. Smith had nothing to learn from anybody. He was up to every move on the board; and, having filled the papers with paragraphs, he set up outside the theatre itself a couple of life-sized posters, depicting a shapely young woman, clad in little beyond her beauty and a wisp of muslin, galloping bare-backed from one yawning chasm to another. This was felt to be going too far for mid-Victorian propriety; and the posters were denounced as a "public scandal." The not unnatural result was, to send half London surging across Westminster Bridge to gaze at them. Altogether, the public's curiosity as to what would be set before

them was well whetted. The result was a house packed from floor to ceiling with whiskered and embroidered-waistcoated Corinthians, accompanied by crinolined and chignoned ladies, in the stalls and boxes, and shirt-sleeved and unshaven denizens of the New Cut in the pit and gallery, when, on the night of October 3, 1864, the curtain rang up on "Lord Byron's Celebrated Drama of *Mazeppa*, with a Grand Stud of Forty Horses, Two Hundred Soldiers, and a Superb Ballet."

Dramatic history was written that night at Astley's, as it had never yet been written there. From the first moment that she stepped on to the stage, garbed as Cassimir (in silk pantaloons) and whispered soft nothings into the receptive ear of Olinska, the thronged house was captured by Adah Isaacs Menken. All held their breath. Even the pit left off sucking oranges, while—not to be outdone in good manners—the front row of the gallery temporarily abandoned its time-honoured practice of dropping whelk shells over the railing.

Theatre-goers in the 'sixties were simple-minded. They liked their drama hot and strong; and the outburst of applause that met the finale was as spontaneous as it was genuine. "After bowing her acknowledgments again and again," says one who was there, "Miss Menken expressed her thanks for the warmth of the reception accorded her in neat and appropriate remarks which elicited fresh approval. A double recall followed the fall of the curtain, when she was twice led forward by the gallant Mr. Smith. There is no doubt as to the bill at Astley's being to the taste of the public; and our fair visitor may add to the laurels secured by her in America another chaplet woven by the hands of her English admirers."

2

In the 'sixties members of the theatrical profession were regarded as small fry, and the Press as a whole attached much less importance to their doings than is now the case. Several papers, indeed, did not publish any notice of the new Mazeppa until some days after the production. As a class, too, the critics, except those of the more obscure organs, which had one eye (if not both eyes) on the advertisement columns, restrained any raptures they might have felt. Most of them steered a middle course.

As was perhaps inevitable, much more notice was taken of Miss Menken's costume than of her acting. The majority of the critics dubbed it "daring." One of them, in the *Morning Star*, hoped for the best, but obviously feared the worst.

"For some time past," he wrote, "the dead walls and hoardings of the metropolis have been covered with huge coloured woodcuts depicting an almost naked woman strapped to the back of a fiercely rampant steed. . . . Properly-minded folk among us rubbed their eyes in blank amazement at the managerial announcement that such an exhibition would be permitted in a respectable English theatre."

Sobersides, of the *Athenæum*, who was all for uplift in the drama, also shook his head over the bill at Astley's :

"Without too strongly impugning the propriety of exhibiting any lady in the positions required by the leading incident of this story, we may regret that the manager has not elected to appeal to a purer dramatic taste, or that the mental and moral state of his audience rendered this impossible. . . . Miss Menken is doubtless a great horse-breaker, but we cannot compliment her on being a great actress."

Somebody else solemnly declared the new Mazeppa to be "an equivocal exhibition, and a discreet compromise between the objectionable and the prudent." The *Queen*, in its capacity as "The Lady's Newspaper," was similarly outspoken :

"The walls of the town have been for some time placarded with very striking bills of a woman strapped to a horse's back. This is supposed to depict an American female horse-rider, Madame Adah Isaacs Menken [*sic*], who appeared on Monday evening to a crowded audience at Astley's, and quite fulfilled all that the placards and poetical announcements had foreshadowed. . . . It is certainly not a sign of advancing refinement when a female horse-rider can attract by her apparently being put in a hazardous position, and emulating the muscular power of a man. Verily, the nineteenth century, though boastful of its delicacy, countenances some very coarse proceedings."

Another organ of opinion had the following :

"Miss Adah Isaacs Menken—otherwise 'the naked woman,' as some of the American journalists have called her—has been engaged to appear as the Tartar youth. Strictly measured by a dressmaker, or weighed in a pair of scales, her scanty costume would perhaps prove more airy than that worn by ballet-dancers. Miss Menken's figure is good and muscular ; and as Mr. E. T. Smith has engaged her figure, she adheres to her contract in showing it. On horseback, she looks like Lady Godiva in a shift."

On this subject of feminine dress, theatre-goers among our grandparents were obviously more thin-skinned than is now the case, for a rigid standard of decorum was also applicable to the audience's side of the curtain ; and any departure from it met with reprisals. This is clear from a shocked paragraph chronicling a happening



THE "MAZEPPA GALLOP"
Bound to the "Wild horse of Tartary."

at another theatre while *Mazeppa* was being played at Astley's :

“ During the evening there transpired an occurrence to which we have some delicacy in alluding ; but which being, so far as we are aware, without precedent in a London theatre (and also indicating a censorship of manners in a quarter where refinement is perhaps least to be expected), should not be suffered by us to pass unnoticed. In the stalls, which were occupied by a number of ladies and gentlemen of established social position and in full evening costume, there was seated a remarkably pretty woman, the extreme lowness of whose corsage was a subject of much criticism. It obviously scandalised the audience, among the feminine portion of whom a most painful sensation was clearly perceptible. At last, public indignation found tangible expression. No sooner had the curtain fallen on the first piece, than a voice from the gallery was heard to utter in measured accents an injunction that could be applicable to but one individual. Pale with emotion, yet still retaining her placid look—for there was no actual immodesty in her demeanour—the offender drew her cloak across her shoulders. A few minutes later she left the house, amid well-merited hisses from the gallery, and stern silence from the occupants of the stalls and boxes.”

Decorum was one thing ; *décolletage* was another. In the considered opinion of 1864 the two did not blend.

The version of *Mazeppa* as offered at Astley's was dealt with by the *Orchestra* in both a leading article, “ Beauty Unadorned,” and a separate criticism :

“ Miss Adah Isaacs Menken is less indelicate than her picture, though the enjoyment of her audience may not be increased by the circumstance. The reservation in favour of some little decency is due perhaps to the fear of the Lord Chamberlain, or to

the conscience of Mr. E. T. Smith. . . . The applauding shouts that go from an overcrowded house at every bold movement of the semi-nude actress prove that an insensitive public could stand a good deal more if it were offered them. That ladies attend the performance none can deny. We wonder if a lady—that is, a lady in the true acceptance—would go a second time ? ”

Having propounded this problem, Mawworm left it to his readers for solution, and went on to something else :

“ The attraction which draws full houses to Astley’s,” he continued, “ lies undoubtedly in its impurity. People expect the voluptuous pictures scattered about London, and the voluptuous verses printed on the playbills, to be realised by the American actress ; and they go there for that purpose. . . . We ourselves should hesitate about taking a sister just now to Astley’s. No, in the name of purity, let us have no more ‘ classical ’ importations from America or elsewhere.”

The *Court Journal* (but not the *Court Circular*) also had something to say about her :

“ MENKEN is the fashion of the metropolis. She is the most talked-of actress in London ; and in society, at the clubs, in the streets, and on ‘Change, the name of MENKEN reigns paramount. The lady Mazeppa will make a fortune for both herself and her manager.”

The “ classes ” as well as the “ masses ” bestowed their patronage on Astley’s ; and Mr. Smith was able to give the reporters, who were always hanging round him for copy, a long list of “ aristocratic and illustrious visitors who attended during the first month.” This list was said by Mr. Smith (but by nobody else)

to include the Duke of Cambridge, the Duke of Hamilton, the Marquess of Abercorn, the Earl of Chesterfield, and the Earl of Uxbridge, together with Lord Bateman and Lord Chelsea, and such smaller fry as mere baronets. A little later on, the manager was in a position to add to his "bag" the names of Lord Clarence Paget and the Countess of Wilton. As was his custom, he made the most of them.

American readers were also regaled with a choice bit of gossip :

"The Menken waxeth fat in the land of Dukes and Duchesses ; yea, she even basketh in the sunshine of Royalty. Astley's, where Menken and Mazeppa hold full sway, is still the great centre of attraction for sightseers, old and young, their Royal Nibs, and others of lesser degree. Among the celebrities who attended her performances up to the last advices were his Royal Highness the Duke of Cambridge, with the Duchess [*sic*] of Sefton and suite ; his Grace the Duke of Hamilton ; and Lord and Lady Lincoln. The three latter visited the fair Mazeppa in her dressing-room after the first act.

"As the Duke of Cambridge always precedes the Prince of Wales in his patronage of public amusements, it is expected that the Prince and Princess will attend Astley's on their return to England, when Manager Smith will have a box fitted up in special grandeur to receive them. A copy of the Press notices of Miss Menken is to be printed on white satin and bound in purple velvet, and the Duke of Hamilton has promised to submit this to the Royalties."

The wish was here father to the thought. At any rate there is no record that Marlborough House ever patronised Astley's.

Although several of the "celebrities" who figured

on the list of visitors with which the imaginative Mr. Smith furnished the Press did not go to Astley's, quite a number of well-known people did go there, if only out of curiosity. Among them was Charles Dickens. He had once, years earlier, seen *Mazeppa* played by a touring company at Ramsgate, "in three long acts without an H in them"; and he thought he would like to renew his acquaintance with the drama.

This second visit was, according to John Forster, described by the novelist in the following terms :

"At Astley's there has been much puffing at great cost of a certain Miss Adah Isaacs Menkin [*sic*], who is to be seen bound on the horse in *Mazeppa*. . . . Last night, having a boiling head, I went out from here to cool myself on Waterloo Bridge, and I thought I would go and see this heroine. Applied at the box-door for a stall. 'None left, sir.' For a box ticket. 'Only standing room, sir.' . . . Now who do you think the lady is? If you don't already know, ask that question of the highest Irish mountains that look eternal, and they'll never tell you—Mrs. Heenan!"

On hearing of this unsuccessful attempt to see her, Adah Menken wrote to Dickens, offering to put a box at his disposal for any other night. The offer was accepted; and, after the performance, Dickens had a chat with her in her dressing-room. They also met on other occasions, for the novelist was always ready to study "character."

3

After her triumphs in New York and London, Adah Isaacs Menken, wanting a fresh field to conquer, betook herself to Paris, where she was under contract to appear at the Gaîté, in *Les Pirates de la Savane*. This



JOHN CAMEL HEENAN
Reputed husband of Adah Isaacs Menken.

was a much-revised version of an old melodrama, with a special "Mazeppa act" interpolated into it by the authors, Anicet Bourgeois and Ferdinand Dugué.

"Don't worry," they said, when she wrote to enquire about their progress. "Your part is the best one in the play, and we're sure you'll be satisfied."

"Well, mind it has lots of long speeches," she urged.

"That, of course, is understood," they answered. "Have no fear."

But dramatists would promise anything, as Adah Menken was to discover when, in November 1866, she began to rehearse. On receiving her part from the prompter, she found it to be markedly lacking in the long declamatory passages for which she had stipulated. As a matter of fact, there were no passages of any description in it. Still, since it required her to bestride a horse and dash up mountainous chasms, clad in the scantiest of costumes, and perform prodigies of valour to a musical accompaniment, she felt that she could "make something of it." The rehearsals showed that she could make a good deal of it, and the manager and authors were loud in their congratulations. She was an acquisition, they declared, and just what was wanted to give a much-needed fillip to the programme.

M. Dumaine, the manager of the Gaîté, had a "pull" with the Press, and never neglected an opportunity to exercise it. He was not fastidious what the papers said, so long as they said something. Some of the things they said about the new star were distinctly odd. Thus, the unfettered imagination of one paragraphist led him to tell his readers that, "Among her various husbands, the lovely Miss Mazeppa Menken has counted the Brothers Davenport." This authority also declared that she was being accompanied from London

by her sister, who was bringing the horse which she was to ride in the second act.

"But it isn't true," she protested.

"That doesn't matter," was the response. "It's publicity."

If the Paris journalists seldom managed to print her name correctly, the theatre staff set them the example, for, when, on December 31, 1866, the curtain rose on *Les Pirates de la Savane*, she was billed as "Miss Isaac Menken." Her reception, however, more than made up for this slip, as the critics were lavish in their encomiums.

"I doubt," wrote Jules Claretie, "if anybody but Talma himself would have received a more rapturous ovation than did the intrepid Miss Menken. Her courage will do much to make the piece a success, but her beauty will do more."

A similar opinion was voiced by *Le Figaro*: "Miss Menken," said this authority, "sustains her part with rare skill and vivacity. This is specially noticeable in the tableau where, in a costume which is as primitive as possible, she is fastened to the back of a horse and condemned to perish like Mazeppa." Other dramatic critics followed this lead. Thus, according to *La Patrie*, "Miss Adah, who has a tall and supple figure, with gazelle eyes and a complete lack of British phlegm, gives a wonderfully spirited performance"; and the raptures of *La Gazette des Étrangers* concluded with a demand that "all our theatre-goers should shout 'Hurrah for the Menken!'"

As her part was that of Leo, a Mexican brigand, who happened to be dumb, no linguistic strain was put upon the new-comer. Perhaps this was just as well, for, as a critic pointed out, "Miss Menken does not speak the

language of Voltaire, and can only say 'Hop ! Hop !' in our tongue." Still, this appeared to be quite enough for the Parisians, and, as *L'Illustration* put it, "The Gaîté finishes 1866 and begins 1867 with a success."

Theatrical managers are apt to be optimistic, and to think that every production they undertake will develop into a gold mine. Still, where this one was concerned, such optimism was well founded, for the success of *Les Pirates* was beyond the fondest hopes of the syndicate that was financing it. But considerable competition existed in Paris during that spring of 1867. None of it solid or stolid. Instead, everything light and bright and amusing. Thus, Marie Rose was at the Opéra-Comique ; a young beginner, Sarah Bernhardt, was at the Odéon ; Hortense Schneider, in *La Bella Hélène*, was at the Variétés ; and, to give a finishing touch to the dramatic fare being submitted, Cora Pearl, in diamonds (and very little else) was exhibiting herself at the Bouffes-Parisiens. Yet, with all these counter-attractions clamouring for patronage, nothing could eclipse the popularity of the Gaîté bill. Within the first month the programme there brought 150,000 francs to the box-office, and those, it must be remembered, were days when francs were francs. For much of this tribute the directors were indebted to the prevision which had led them to secure Adah Isaacs Menken. A daring risk, since she was absolutely unknown to their special public. Still, the risk was justified ; and, foreigner though she was, the boulevardiers took her to their hearts. "During one hundred nights," says a paragraphist, "our visitor played to overflowing houses, her beauty and her genius making as strong an impression upon Paris as they had already made upon New York and London."

The hundredth night appears to have been something of a function in the annals of the Gaîté. To mark it in fitting fashion, there were new dresses and new scenery ; and a new number, "Léo's Galop," composed by M. Kalkbrenuer, was allotted to the orchestra. It was also announced that, as an additional attraction, Miss Menken would, on this occasion, have a "speaking part" and thus exhibit her gifts as an elocutionist. But this promise was not kept, for, on discovering that it merely consisted of one word, *Bonjour*, "the justly angered Miss Adah declined to accept the part." Still, a special fillip was given to the performance by the fact that it was in the nature of a "command," being attended, it is said, by Napoleon III and the Prince Imperial (but not by the Empress Eugenie), together with the King of the Hellenes, Prince Oscar of Sweden, and the Duke of Edinburgh. Oddly enough, however, the *Court Circular*, which was supposed to keep a vigilant eye on the activities of Royalty, did not allude to Prince Alfred's patronage. Possibly, the fact that it took place on a Sunday evening was responsible for the omission.

The summer of 1867 was a memorable one in Paris. The capital had never been so full, for the Exhibition of that year was drawing all the world to the Champs-de-Mars. From end to end, the town shone like a glittering carnival ; and the theatres and music-halls and dancing haunts, the cafés and restaurants, were crowded to overflowing. The success of *Les Pirates* continued unchecked. "The name of Adah Isaacs Menken," says the author of a florid column, "was on everybody's lips and in everybody's thoughts. Her voluptuous beauty turned masculine heads ; and the general splendour of her life, her gorgeous toilettes, her

showy equipage in the Bois de Boulogne, her throng of lovers, and her theatrical distinction as an actress made her the subject of feminine tongues."

Some of them were not too charitable. Still, the new-comer could afford to ignore them. She had what her feminine critics lacked, a "following." A very big one. All Paris wanted to know her. A considerable sprinkling did know her, for, as in London, she cultivated editors and reporters and the society of people who could be "useful." On this account, she was once a guest at a reception given by the proprietor of *Le Figaro*, with the object of raising funds to build and equip a hostel for broken-down journalists. A successful evening, finishing up with a playlet by Sardou, in which she appeared with Coquelin and Adelina Patti.

4

Reporters and editors and newspaper owners were all very well in their way, but Miss Menken cherished loftier ideas.

"When I go to Paris," she had boasted, "Alexandre Dumas shall be my lover."

She had not yet met the famous author. It was, however, only a question of time, for Dumas haunted the *coulisses* of the Gâté, where he was an honoured figure. There Adah Menken noticed him one evening, lolling in the wings and following her with amorous glances.

"Who is that fat fellow with the woolly hair?" she enquired carelessly. On being told by a shocked prompter that it was none other than the distinguished novelist, she invited him to call.

Dumas, having an amiable weakness for feminine

homage, accepted her overtures with avidity. He was getting on in years now, and a fresh "conquest" was very welcome. Where Adah Menken was concerned, this was a real one ; and it progressed at such a pace that within a fortnight she left the Hôtel de Suez, and was established by her new admirer in more luxurious quarters in another part of the town. When summer came, and Paris was too hot to be comfortable, she accompanied him to Bougival.

An oddly assorted pair, perhaps, but they got on very well together.

As their intimacy increased, tongues began to wag. Shortly after it had begun, a gossip in *Le Soleil* declared that "Dumas is about to marry the young person at the Gâté." Another paragraph announced that he had gone to Frankfort "to discuss the production of a play he was writing for the La Belle Menken, whose superb figure has been admired by everybody in Paris."

"Those who have had the privilege of seeing her," says one of these admirers, "bound half naked to a spirited horse, will never forget the spectacle. A photograph, depicting her with lustrous heavily-lidded eyes, a somewhat sad expression in them, her black hair and her beautiful body, has enjoyed a tremendous vogue."

But there were also other portraits of her that were offered for sale, round some of which curious stories began to gather. Naturally enough, the scandal-mongers were not long in getting hold of them. The first to do so was a contributor to *Le Figaro* :

"There are to be seen just now in the shop windows a series of astonishing *cartes-de-visite* of Miss Menken and Alexandre Dumas, joined together in



MENKEN AND DUMAS
Photograph that led to a lawsuit.

poses plastiques. Can M. Dumas be her father? In one of the series he is in his shirt sleeves. Oh, for shame! The manager of the *Gâté* should secure him for *Les Pirates de la Savane*, as such a step would give the piece a fresh attraction."

This photograph was the subject of some odd criticisms. "The weather," says one, "must have been melting when it was taken, for M. Dumas is perspiring copiously."

The theory that "the camera cannot lie" is demonstrably false. With a very little manipulation, it can lie as well as anything else. A number of the *cartes-de-visite* labelled Adah Menken are obviously fakes, for the woman in them is clearly long past the flush of youth, and is also endowed with a figure that could never have bestridden a horse of any description, much less the "fiery untamed" Mazeppa one.

As a matter of fact, several of the daguerreotypes purporting to be of Adah Menken and Dumas (and of which hundreds were sold to a gullible public) are really of substitutes, who, because their figures bore some resemblance to those of their principals, were employed to face the camera. Genuine Menken and Dumas heads would then be carefully superimposed on them.

There is, however, among the flood of spurious portraits a genuine daguerreotype, much esteemed by collectors, showing Dumas with his arms round Adah Menken's neck and imprinting a more than paternal kiss on her lips. In another one, it is the actress who is embracing the novelist. The sitting for this "study" was given to a M. Liébert, but on the understanding that it should not be published. The understanding, however, was not observed, and a number of copies were printed and sold.

While Dumas liked publicity, this, he considered, was going too far. Much too far, for it held him up as a laughing-stock. Accordingly, he went off hot-foot to his solicitor, and instructed him to sue M. Liébert for damages, and to have the sale of the print stopped and all copies destroyed.

When judgment was given against him, Dumas appealed to a superior court. This time he was successful. Still, he had to listen to some sharp thrusts from the opposing counsel :

"M. Dumas," declared this authority, "is, whether he wishes it or not, a father. He has a daughter, and he actually puts her portrait beside this other one. He is near an old age which should be respected. He wants the sale of this second photograph annulled. The only thing that should be annulled is his dalliance with Miss Menken."

The Paris papers had a good deal to say about the action. They were not flattering to the plaintiff.

"M. Dumas," said a solemn editorial, "would have done better to have lost his action in the first instance than to have won it in this fashion on appeal. . . . One of the prints in which he figures was of such a kind that he admits having written on it the shocking inscription 'authorised, but not for display.'"

This was obviously a discreet reference to a letter to the photographer, in which Dumas had observed, *Les portraits en caleçons sont autorisés sans étalage*.

5

After Paris, the next capital in the itinerary of "Mazeppa Menken" (as she had come to be known) was Vienna. Although she was successful enough

there and filled the theatre nightly, that the visit proved a disappointment is clear from a letter she wrote to an American admirer. He had sent her some of his verses, and won her heart by going into raptures about some of her own :

“ . . . I am not in a condition to tell you all the impressions your poems have made upon me. I have to-day fallen into the bitterness of a sad, reflective, and desolate mood. You know that I am alone, and that I work, and without sympathy ; and that the unshrined ghosts of wasted hours and of lost loves are always tugging at my heart.

I send you a treasure ; the portrait and autograph of my friend Alexandre Dumas. Value it for his sake, as well as for the sake of the poor girl he honours with his love. Oh ! how I wish you could know him ! You could understand his great soul so well—the King of Romance, the Child of Gentleness and Love. Take him to your heart for ever.

“ . . . I shall not remain here long. Vienna is detestable beyond expression. Ah ! my comrade, Paris is, after all, the heart of the world. Know Paris and die.

“ And now, farewell ! Let me try to help you with my encouragement, and the best feelings of my heart. Think of me. I am with you in spirit. Your future is to be glorious. Heaven bless you.

INFELIX MENKEN.”

This letter was obviously written when things were not going too well with the writer. Accompanying it were some verses of her own composition :

The poet's noblest duty is
Whatever theme he sings,
To draw the soul of beauty forth
From unconsidered things.

That howsoe'er despised may be
The humblest form of earth,
His kindly sympathy may weave
A halo round its birth.

Scarcely above the Christmas-cracker level, this. Still, Miss Menken always had a kindly sympathy for the efforts of other bards. It stood the most severe tests ; and even when an aspiring author sent her a ballad, with the refrain :

Someone has gone to the bright golden shore.
Ring the bell softly, there's crape on the door !

she acknowledged it in rapturous terms : “ How inexpressibly beautiful,” she wrote, “ is the sentiment of this song, and what an eloquent simplicity of language ! I have wept over it again and again ; and never has a poem touched my heart-strings more deeply.”

6

Tired of her prolonged wanderings abroad, Adah Isaacs Menken said good-bye to Vienna and returned to England. The moment was well chosen. The year was at the spring ; and all—or nearly all—was right with her particular world. She had been away just long enough to make people want to see her again ; and managers were only too anxious to give the public an opportunity of doing so.

That summer of 1867 was a period when the star of Adah Isaacs Menken was at its apogee. “ London lost its head about her, and her name was on everybody's lips.” She was “ news.” Reporters, notebook in hand, dogged her steps ; and everything that she did (and much more that she did not do) was assiduously chronicled. As before, she took care to meet “ useful ” people ; and at the Westminster Palace Hotel, where she installed herself in a luxurious suite, they were made welcome. “ Nobility and even Royalty,” says an

impressed visitor, "paid court to her there; the aristocracy of art thronged her *salon*."

Well, in this world, all things are comparative. Still, it is a fact that her "receptions" were attended by, among others, Charles Dickens, Charles Reade, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Frederick Sandys, and Algernon Charles Swinburne; as also by such smaller fry as the Rev. J. M. Bellew, E. L. Blanchard, Shirley Brooks, John Oxenford, Jefferson Prowse, and Swinburne's secretary, John Thomson. Swinburne himself was to come on the scene later.

An American reporter, untrammelled by any strict regard for mere facts, contributed to his own journal a quaint account of the Menken *salon* :

"Among her regular visitors at the Westminster Hotel in London, England, were the most distinguished literary men, such as Charles Dickens, Charles Reade, Watts Phillips, John Oxenford, the actor Flector [*sic*], and the Duke of Hamilton, together with others of note who assembled nightly at her sociables, there to listen to the sparkling wit of one who must have been possessed of real genius since she entertained such a brilliant gathering."

Edgar Lee Masters, in his *Domesday Book*, has a passage descriptive of this stage in her career :

She lands in London, takes a gorgeous suite
In London's grandest hostelry, entertains
Charles Dickens, Prince Baerto, and Charles Read,
The Duke of Wellington, and Swinburne, Sand
And Jenny Lind; and has a liveried coachman;
And for a crest a horse's head surmounting
Four aces, if you please. And plays Mazeppa,
And piles the money up.

Something—a good deal—must be allowed for poetic licence. Still, there is no acceptable record that Miss

Menken possessed the acquaintance of the Duke of Wellington (who, as it happens, had been in his grave for twelve years) or of Jenny Lind. "Charles Read," too, is obviously Charles Reade, and "Sand" would appear to be Frederick Sandys.

Shirley Brooks was one of the lesser lions to come under the spell of this would-be Récamier of Pimlico.

"Things have changed with me," he wrote in a facetious letter (quoted by S. M. Ellis in *The Hardman Papers*) about this time. "Mrs. Sothern took me to see Ada [Brooks's spelling] Menken, and I am my own no longer. . . . I am Ada's. Ada, sole daughter of my house and heart. She has written a poem, and she calls it 'The Two Hemispheres.' I do not know why. She lives at No. 26 Norfolk Street, W.C. Swinburne is the only rival I dread—he knew her first. But I shall sit upon his corpse."

The manner in which Adah Isaacs Menken swam into the orbit of Algernon Charles Swinburne was characteristic of her. It was also one that led to results unforeseen by either of them.

"It is evident," says Mr. Thomas Wise, in his authoritative *Bibliography of the Writings in Prose and Verse of Algernon Charles Swinburne*, "that for a time the poet was infatuated with the handsome and much married actress"; and Sir Edmund Gosse, in a memoir contributed by him to the *Dictionary of National Biography*, declares point-blank, "Swinburne now became intimate with Adah Isaacs Menken."

When this article appeared, a flatulent journalist, who had constituted himself a Swinburne "authority," was much upset. He nearly foamed at the mouth. "The memoir of Algernon Charles Swinburne," he bleated, "has burst in the literary world like a bomb-

shell. Many a news editor in Fleet Street must have read it with pangs of despairing envy ; for there in cold print were things that even the Yellow Press would have hesitated to publish. This passage is absolutely unpardonable."

But what Gosse had said was perfectly true. There was never any secret about it. But just how far the intimacy between the pair was platonic, and just how far it was something else, is open to question. The one hard fact that emerges from the welter of lies and embroideries that has sprung up round the two protagonists is that Swinburne's rôle was of comparatively minor importance. The initial move, too, came from the lady. As was her custom, when she wanted to know anybody, she did not wait for such a commonplace as a formal introduction. She wanted to know the author of the famous *Poems and Ballads* that had just set literary London by the ears. Accordingly she went to see him, nominally "to express her thanks in person for some very pleasant remarks he had made about her acting."

Much was to come of that visit.

Adah Menken appears to have had the impression that Swinburne was genuinely interested in her amateurish efforts to storm Parnassus. She was always "talking poetry" to him, in season and out of season. Sometimes, very much out of season. Where this matter is concerned a curious revelation is to hand of how far she was prepared to go in this direction. That she was prepared to go quite a long way is clear from an account given in a rare pamphlet, *A Fragment of Autobiography* :

"It was a wild bet of Rossetti's that challenged Adah Menken to sleep with Swinburne. She visited his rooms, and accomplished her purpose—hence the

reference in one of these letters. But it was quite inaccurate to describe her as his mistress, although Swinburne was, as the correspondence shows, rather proud at the time of having his name associated with the fair Mazeppa."

The story runs that, when they were breakfasting together the next morning, Swinburne remarked: "My darling, a woman with such beautiful legs as yours should not bother her head about poetry."

7

Wordsworth, it will be remembered, called Walter Scott the "World's Darling." Swinburne called Adah Isaacs Menken the "World's Delight." Another of his names for her was "Dolores."

To seal their newly established acquaintanceship, the pair gave a sitting to a photographer. Miss Menken, with an eye to the value of publicity for actresses (and undisturbed by a recollection of what had happened in Paris), saw to it that a large number of copies should be made before the negative was destroyed. There was trouble about this, since some of the copies "fell into the hands of relatives, who kicked up a great row." But the poet himself adopted a less critical attitude. Thus, writing from the Arts Club to his friend George Powell, he said:

" . . . I must send you in a day or two a photograph of my present possessor—known to Britannia as Miss Menken, and to me as Dolores (her real Christian name)—and myself taken together. We both came out very well. Of course, it's *private*."

As was the fashion among young women in those mid-Victorian days, Adah Menken kept an "Album." At her request, Swinburne contributed to its pages some lines which he called "Dolorida":



"DOLORES" AND SWINBURNE
Poetry and Passion.

*Combien de temps, dis, la belle,
Dis, veux-tu m'être fidèle ?
Pour une nuit, pour un jour,
Mon amour !*

*L'amour nous flatte et nous touche
Du doigt, de l'œil, de la bouche,
Pour un jour, pour une nuit,
Et s'enfuit.*

It sounds, perhaps, incredible ; but, despite sixty years of compulsory education for the criminal classes, a reviewer actually alluded to these verses as a "sonnet." He even did so twice in one article.

When, sixteen years later, the "Dolorida" verses were republished under his signature in a Christmas annual, Swinburne wrote a furious letter to the editor, denying that he had ever written them. But his memory was at fault, as was proved by an inspection of the original manuscript.

After a time, the demands of "Dolores" became a little embarrassing. When Swinburne, possibly yielding to outside pressure, showed himself remiss in responding to her advances, she communicated with a friend of his. Thereupon, this friend, Thomas Purnell, wrote a letter to him, of which the following passages are reproduced by Mr. Thomas Wise in *A Swinburne Library* :

December 4, 1867.

" . . . To-day I have had a letter from Dolores—such a letter ! She fears you are ill ; she is unable to think of anything but you ; she wishes me to telegraph to her if you are in danger, and she will fly on the wings of the wind to nurse you. She has become a soft-throated serpent, strangling prayers on her white lips to kiss the poet, whose absence leaves her with ghosts and shadows. She concludes :

" ' Tell him all—say out of my despairing nature to him—take care of his precious life. Write at once ;

believe in me and my holy love for him. Let him write one word in your letter. He will, for he is so good.' ”

“ What do you think of this ? It is Cleopatra over again.”

But it was Cleopatra in a crinoline, for Adah Menken stuck to that item of feminine apparel long after it had “ gone out ” among her sex. Still, if she were behind the mode in one direction, she was in advance of it in another, for she wore her hair cut short.

At the time of this unconventional call upon him, Adah Menken was living in a private hotel, known as Cataldi's, off Piccadilly, and Swinburne had rooms at 22A Dorset Street, Portman Square. By the way, in the London Directory for that year (1867) he figures at that address as “ Swinburn, Algerine Charles, Esq.” This is not a very creditable effort on the part of an official publication.

It was while she was living at Cataldi's Hotel that Adah Menken wrote to another friend, Robert Reece, giving him her views on matrimony :

“ To-day, Roberto, I should like to see you if you are good tempered, and think you could be bored with me and my ghosts. They will be harmless to you, these ghosts of mine ; they are sad, soft-footed things that wear my brain and live on my heart, that is, the fragment I have left to be called heart.

“ I am now digressing into mere twaddle from what I started out to say to you. Come when you get time, and tell me of our friends, the gentle souls of the air. Mine fly from me, only to fill my being with the painful remembrance of their lost love for me—even me, once the blest and chosen ! Now a royal tigress waits in her lonely jungle for the coming of the King of Forests. Brown gaiters not excluded.

Yours, through all stages of local degradation,
INFELIX MENKEN.”

But, despite what she had written to Reece, Adah Menken was not lonely, for, although she had given up her *salon*, her rooms at Cataldi's were still crowded. Dickens and Charles Reade—and others of importance—had, it is true, dropped out of the gatherings over which she once presided ; but a mob of hungry (and thirsty) individuals, hovering on the fringes of “Bohemia,” were more than ready to take their place. She got on very well with them, for she kept a good table ; and, so long as they discussed her “poetry” and professed to admire it, there was no stint of liquor and cigars. Many of the visitors attempted to sponge on her. Some of them succeeded, for there never was a more generous woman.

8

We all have our disappointments and thwarted endeavours. Adah Isaacs Menken had hers. She would cheerfully have abandoned the considerable position she had achieved as an actress for a foothold on Parnassus. Her real ambition was to be accepted as a poetess. Unfortunately, while a number of American organs were hospitable, no English paper of repute would publish her efforts. Editors, she said, were “ignorant and jealous.” She would convince them of their error. It was on this account that she had consulted Swinburne.

But Swinburne's expert advice “not to bother herself about poetry” was unpalatable. She did bother herself. She also bothered other people. Among them was Dickens, to whom she wrote, asking him to accept the dedication of a volume of verses that she was resolved to publish, and, if necessary, at her own cost.

Either this letter, or the photograph of herself, which, together with some samples of her Muse, she enclosed, appealed to the novelist, for he answered by return :

GAD'S HILL PLACE,
HIGHAM BY ROCHESTER, KENT.
Monday, Twenty-first
October, 1867.

"DEAR MISS MENKEN,

"I shall have great pleasure in accepting your dedication, and I thank you for your portrait as a highly remarkable specimen of photography.

"I also thank you for the verses enclosed in your note. Many such enclosures come to me, but few so pathetically written, and fewer still so modestly sent.

Faithfully yours,
CHARLES DICKENS."

The title chosen for the projected volume was *Infelicia*. In securing a publisher, much help was forthcoming from Swinburne's secretary. This was a certain John Thomson, who, falling desperately in love with Adah Menken, and anxious to do her a good turn, carried off the manuscript of *Infelicia* to John Camden Hotten and persuaded him to accept it.

The publishing world moves in a mysterious way. Still, it is possible that Hotten really was impressed either by these turgid outpourings, or else by Thomson's enthusiasm. Yet it is difficult to see in them anything that raises them above the level of the "Poet's Corner" in an amateur magazine. What they chiefly suggested was a mixture of Walt Whitman and water, with here and there a dash of the Psalms of David and Martin Tupper.

There is a theory that John Thomson wrote *Infelicia* ; and colour is given to it from the fact that the manuscript

was in his handwriting. This, however, was because he had copied it out for Adah Isaacs Menken. If further proof were wanted that he had no share in the actual authorship, it is to be found in the columns of the American papers (such as the *Clipper* and the *Mercury*) where the verses appeared long before Miss Menken came to England.

But, among wagging tongues, there was also another and much more incredible theory concerning the authorship of *Infelicia*. Mr. Thomas James Wise, in his *A Swinburne Library*, deals with it in effective fashion :

“For many years there existed a more or less general impression that Swinburne was the author of a number of the poems contained in this volume. Such, however, was not the case. The author of *Atalanta* is not to be held responsible for any one of the thirty-one sets of verses of which the book is composed. He himself stated in the most positive manner that he did not write a single line of any one of them.”

All agog with pleasurable anticipation at the prospect of the laurels coming to her, Miss Menken bombarded the firm with letters. She was not a peeress in her own right, but her signature read as if she thought she were one :

Wednesday.

“DEAR MR. HOTTEN,

“I am much pleased with the interview between yourself and Mr. Ellington yesterday. Your ideas are all excellent, and I am confident that we will have a grand success. I will call at your office to-morrow about two o’clock, if you will be so kind as to be at home to me. I am anxious to see the designs that are to be engraved ; also I would be glad if I might look over the latest proofs again, as I was very ill when they were corrected for me,

“ You know that I never really liked the idea of my portrait being printed, but I am willing to submit to your judgment in all pertaining to our mutual interest. The proofs of the portrait you sent me are wonderfully well engraved.

Believe me, dear Sir, yours truly,
MENKEN.”

Hotten, like some others of his craft, was more given to promises than to performances. Owing to his dilatoriness, relations between the pair grew a little strained. Miss Menken, however, obviously had a forgiving disposition :

“ DEAR MR. HOTTEN,

“ How long to wait for the ‘ proofs ’ ? You do not forget ? When am I to see you ? When will you advertise the book ? Remember, I ask these questions merely from curiosity. The affair is decidedly all yours.

“ I am satisfied with all you have done, except the portrait. I do not find it to be in character with the volume. It looks *affected*. Perhaps I am a little vain—all women are—but the picture is certainly not beautiful. I have portraits that I think are beautiful. I daresay they are not like me, but I posed for them. Do tell me, *mon ami*, can we not possibly have another made ?

Your friend,
MENKEN.”

This seems to have been done ; and the letter from Dickens accepting the dedication, together with four lines by Swinburne (printed without acknowledgment) having been added, *Infelicia* was ready to be launched upon an expectant world. A flood of paragraphs appeared in the literary journals, a preliminary puff declaring that the book would be published simultaneously in London, Paris, and New York. This announcement further added ; “ The poems are of a

somewhat religious cast, and will probably surprise such readers as have looked for compositions of quite another character. The book itself, which is dedicated to Charles Dickens, Esq., is one of the daintiest little volumes which have issued from the Press for many years."

But, for all this, *Infelicia* did not appear.

"Printers mustn't be hurried," was Hotten's excuse, when Miss Menken, in much quilted crinoline and feathered hat, called upon him and demanded the reason.

This excuse was not a satisfactory one. As, however, no other was forthcoming, it had to be accepted. All sorts of reasons have been given for Hotten's delay in bringing out the book. The most likely one is that his finances were in a bad condition, and that the copies were being held up by the printers and binders.

In other directions, too, things were not going well with Adah Isaacs Menken at this period. Life was full of annoyances. Her letters to Swinburne were unacknowledged ; and Hotten was still neglecting to bring out her long promised "poems." She had lavished much loving care on them ; and now it all seemed a wasted effort.

Perhaps something of what she was feeling was echoed in the stanzas of her "Infelix," the one lyric of hers that can be regarded as rising above the average :

Where is the promise of my years
Once written on my brow ?
Ere errors, agonies and fears
Brought with them all that speaks in tears,
Ere I had sunk beneath my peers ;
Where sleeps that promise now ?

Nought lingers to redeem those hours,
Still, still to memory sweet !
The flowers that bloomed in sunny bowers
Are withered all ; and Evil towers
Supreme above her sister powers
Of Sorrow and Deceit.

I look along the columned years
And see Life's riven fane,
Just where it fell, amid the jeers
Of scornful lips, whose mocking sneers
For ever hiss within mine ears
To break the sleep of pain.

I can but own my life is vain,
A desert void of peace ;
I missed the goal I sought to gain,
I missed the measure of the strain
That lulls Fame's fever in the brain
And bids Earth's tumult cease.

Myself ! alas for theme so poor !
A theme but rich in Fear ;
I stand a wreck on Error's shore,
A spectre not within the door,
A houseless shadow evermore,
An exile lingering here.

To add to her other troubles, it was about this time that her health began to trouble her ; and she was often subject to severe attacks of pain. She did not know the cause, but she was developing an internal injury, the result of having had a number of bad falls during her *Mazeppa* performances. Being, however, full of pluck, and, having agreed to act at Sadler's Wells Theatre during the whole of May, she resolved to struggle on as long as possible. But it was as much as she could do to get through her work there without collapsing.

The Sadler's Wells Season finished on May 30, 1868.

The ringing down of the curtain there heralded the last appearance in London of Adah Isaacs Menken.

9

Her professional work finished for the time being, and thinking that a change of air might do her some good, Adah Menken left London for Le Havre. It was, perhaps, an odd choice. Still, she knew that Swinburne was in the neighbourhood, stopping at Etretat, and she half hoped that they might meet. But they did not meet, for she lived quietly and alone. As before, however, she was in a constant glare of publicity. Her smallest doings were chronicled ; and certain blackguardly organs affected to discover scandals in her manner of living during this period. One of them, called *The Mask*, came out with a vulgar cartoon, showing Swinburne and Dumas, with Dickens and Charles Reade, and other well-known characters watching her bathe. Accompanying this was a column of letterpress, headed, " Companions of the Bath " :

" One of the muses, a tenth muse of equine drama, is plunging not far off in the waves, fighting her own combats with the billows, probably mounted on one of the white horses from Neptune's own stable. The lovely Menken, by way of variety, has tried a costume for the seaside, instead of the usual baseless fabric which leaves her reckless behind the scenes. Dumas, the Great, the only, the unique Papa Dumas, is going to produce an original drama for the muse, with couplets by A. Swinburne, to be entitled *Le Jeu des Cocottes*."

There was not a word of truth in this. Still, if London did not want Adah Isaacs Menken, Paris did. Henri

Rochefort had written a drama, *Theodorus, Roi d'Abysinie*, for production at the Châtelet, and she was offered a leading part in it. As her memories of Paris were happy, she had no hesitation in accepting the contract, and returned to her former quarters. There she picked up the threads she had dropped, and resumed her friendship with "Papa" Dumas. It was not on quite the old terms, but she was prepared to take them for what they were worth. Also no more visits to the photographers. She had had her lesson.

Much was expected of the Châtelet piece, in which Adah Menken's rôle was that of an Amazon, and was well padded with "business." Perhaps it overtaxed her strength, for during the rehearsals she fell ill and had to withdraw from the cast. Under the circumstances, the Châtelet directorate decided to postpone *Theodorus* and substitute a revival of *Les Pirates*. This, they felt, would impose less demand on Miss Menken, since she was already familiar with what was required of her in it.

But their plans miscarried, for, instead of getting better, she got worse. The doctors prescribing rest and fresh air, she went to a river-side villa, at St. Cloud. The change, however, did her no good; and at the beginning of August she was carried back to Paris, feeling desperately ill. The doctors whom she consulted were much puzzled by her symptoms. Their diagnosis being wrong, they treated her for rheumatism, unaware that the real mischief was an abscess in her ribs. As a natural result, their drugs and purges had no good effect. If anything, they did her harm.

The sands were running out. The curtain was falling. The star of Adah Isaacs Menken had come to earth; and, with it, her tinsel crown lay in the dust of a Paris lodging-house. There it was that, in those last



GRAVE OF ADAM ISAAC'S MENKEN
Tomb at Montparnasse.

sad days, ill and lonely and racked with pain, she waited for the end. But it was dreary waiting. Everything on which she had set her heart had gone wrong. Disappointment after disappointment. Hotten, despite all his smooth promises, still held up the publication of her cherished *Infelicia*, and would not even answer enquiries on the subject. Dumas never came near her. No more friendly letters from Dickens. Not a word from Swinburne.

There could only be one end. It came very suddenly. On the morning of August 10th, 1868, she turned her face to the wall, whispered two words, "Thou Knowest!" and drew a last choking breath.

"*Mort d'Adah Menken!*" read the placards fluttering against the kiosks.

Three days later she was buried at Père Lachaise, in a corner of the cemetery near the tomb of Abelard and Heloise. Swinburne held her thoughts to the last; and above her grave were cut the two words, "Thou Knowest" from his *Ilicet*.

10

When the news of her death was cabled to America, a theatrical journal in New York printed an "obituary poem," a portion of which ran as follows :

What news is this that lightning sped
Has filled our hearts with strange dismay?
Read : "Adah Isaacs Menken's dead—
She died in Paris yesterday."

. . . A thousand eyes
Followed her piquant witcheries,
While half the *ton* of gallant France
Owned to the magic of her glance !

There were eight more verses.

Not quite the high-water mark of poetry, perhaps. Still, the feeling expressed therein was sound, for it was at any rate an effort to do some measure of justice to the memory of a woman round whom had spread much unmerited calumny and a wealth of vicious falsehood.

With the memory of the "Dolores" interlude, and all that it stood for, reawakened, Swinburne was genuinely upset. "I am sure," he wrote to George Powell, "you were very sorry on my account to hear of the death of my poor dear Menken. It was a great shock to me, and a real grief. I was ill for some days. She was most lovable, as a friend as well as a mistress."

In death, as in life, the voice of calumny pursued the dead woman. Scarcely had the grave closed over her when a score of ghouls were busy tearing her reputation to shreds. Some of the obituary notices in the London journals were nothing less than venomous, and would appear to have been inspired by private grudges.

Only a week after her funeral, a smug and malicious attack was published in a paper that took under its wing the joint interests of Bung and the Drama :

"A person who has perhaps caused more talk than was necessary, even in these days of chatter, has died in Paris, Adah Isaacs Menken, and, it is said, at twenty-seven only. Everybody knows for what this performer was notorious ; and most people know as much of her history as they should desire to know. She was not an artist, in the true sense of the word, but had some artistic impulses ; and she had a wild imperfect cleverness of another kind. She wrote verses which were hopelessly bad, but not worse than those of her original [Swinburne] who had deluded some people into believing him a genius. Neither as friends of the Theatrical Profession, nor as moralists, can we find profit or pleasure in dwelling on the subject."

The death of Adah Isaacs Menken formed the subject-matter of hundreds of obituary columns. Floods of vulgar abuse and malicious attacks upon her reputation were mingled with deliberate falsehood. Still, there were exceptions. Perhaps the most sympathetic memoir was one that appeared in the *Standard*, of London :

“ Few women have been more maligned ; and there are few among us of so noble a heart and so generous a nature. She was known well by but few ; yet those few will always retain a pleasant remembrance of her, and will ever have a tender thought and a kind word for the memory of Adah Isaacs Menken.”

For the rest, Adah Isaacs Menken, with her idealisms and enthusiasms, will long continue to be remembered as a woman of outstanding ambition and personality and charm. Like most of us, she did many a foolish thing ; but, unlike most of us, never a mean one.

It is not everybody of whom, when the balance is finally struck, this can be said.

THE WICKLOW PEERAGE CLAIM

The Wicklow Peerage Claim

I

WHERE successions to peerages are concerned, family trees are always so carefully examined and tested for unsound branches that questions as to the next heir seldom arise or permit of any dispute. Still, they do arise occasionally. Among the most remarkable of such was one that had one chapter unfolded in the lying-in ward of a provincial workhouse, and another in the less sombre atmosphere of the Committee for Privileges of the House of Lords.

This was a claim to the Earldom of Wicklow, a cause that attracted an immense amount of public interest during the years 1869 and 1870. But, with romance and mystery and melodrama enveloping it from start to finish, nothing was wanting to secure such a result.

The business was a lengthy one, for the minutes of evidence and the speeches of counsel filled two volumes of nearly 700 pages. The witnesses were drawn from all classes ; and included clergymen, doctors, solicitors, servant girls, shopkeepers and workhouse officials and pauper inmates, together with a couple of nondescripts, figuring respectively as "pot-boy" and "post-boy."

When, in March 1869, William, fourth Earl of Wicklow, was gathered to his fathers, he left no male issue. His younger brother, who had predeceased him, had married twice. Three sons, all of whom were dead, had been born of this first marriage, and two of the second. Accordingly, on the death of his uncle, Charles Francis Arnold Howard, the eldest surviving son of this second marriage was considered to be the heir to the earldom. Not unnaturally he considered himself as such, and assumed the title.

It was at this juncture that a second claimant to the

Wicklow honours appeared on the scene. This was a little boy of five, who was alleged to be the issue of a marriage contracted in 1863 by Charles Howard's elder brother William Howard and a Miss Ellen Richardson.

For all that he was the nephew and heir-presumptive of an earl, the William Howard, who had died in 1864, does not appear to have shed much lustre on the position to which he had been born. The fact, indeed, was so notorious that the conventional opening, "We regret to announce the death," etc., was omitted by a number of papers in their obituary notices. Thus, one such, the *London Review*, began in this fashion :

"If, in his last moments, the unfortunate man who has just died in a brothel in one of the lowest slums of Dublin could have contrasted his death-bed and its surroundings with his opportunities and expectations, he might have cursed the hour which brought him into the world with the certainty of enjoying most of these advantages and the strong possibility of enjoying all of them.

"If one could choose in what position one should be born, it would not show a deficiency of judgment to resolve to come into the world as did the late William George Howard. . . . Yet, in the history of this man, we do not find a single trace of any feeling that he owed to himself or to others the duty of living decently even for a single day. His associates were the lowest of the low, the vilest of the vile. In the peerage he ranked as heir to an earldom. In society the most abandoned and despicable knew and saluted him as 'Billy.' Empty of brain, soft of disposition, easily manipulated by the vicious, and in his feebleness the most notably vicious of them all. He was born rich, and his rank overwhelmed him. He possessed the means to distinguish or debase himself. And of the two, he chose the latter."

A Sunday organ added further particulars :

“ On Friday last an enquiry of melancholy interest was conducted by the Dublin coroner into the circumstances attending the death of Captain William George Howard, nephew of the Earl of Wicklow, who was found dead in a house of ill fame. Mary Lloyd, a woman of the ‘unfortunate’ class, said that the deceased had been living with her for several months ; that he was a married man, but with no family ; that he was a heavy drinker ; and that, although very ill he had refused to let her call in a doctor. While she was giving her evidence, the witness appeared much affected. She frequently clasped her hands and exclaimed, ‘Oh, Billy, Billy, you are gone !’ A surgeon said that the deceased had what is known as a ‘whisky liver.’ The coroner, having summed up, the jury returned a verdict of death from dysentery in a broken down condition.”

The fact of William Howard’s marriage to Ellen Richardson was not disputed. What was disputed was something much more important. This was that William George Howard, the little boy on whose behalf the widow was now claiming the earldom, had been born of this marriage.

Some such claim was not unexpected, for Mrs. Howard had never made any secret of her intention to advance one. Just after her husband’s death, in fact, she took a preliminary step, and caused a letter to be written to the *Daily Telegraph* :

24th October, 1864.

“ Sir,

“ I beg to contradict the evidence given by Mrs. Lloyd at the coroner’s inquest at Dublin, respecting the death of W. G. Howard, Esq., stating that, to the best of her belief, he had a wife but no family. He

has a son living, and I am sorry to add his wife fully expects another increase in the family in a very short time.

I am, Sir, yours, etc.

The Boltons, Brompton."

T. C. CLARK.

Lord Wicklow took prompt action, and instructed his solicitor to communicate with the writer of this letter. No such person, however, could be found at the address given. Thereupon, he himself wrote to the *Times* :

"My attention has been called to a letter, signed 'T. C. Clark,' in which it is said that Mr. W. G. Howard (who was presumptive heir to my peerage), whose death recently took place under distressing circumstances, left a son ; and, further, that his widow expects 'an increase to her family.'

"I trust I should be the last person to peril the birthright of an infant towards whom I could not bear ill-will in consequence of the errors of either or both its parents ; but I think it a duty I owe to my nephew and actual heir, Mr. Charles Howard, of the 11th Hussars, to state thus publicly that neither have I nor any of my family ever before heard of the circumstances therein set forth ; nor have I, after proper enquiry, reason to believe that they are other than the conception of that person's imagination."

Letters passed. Several letters. But in none of those coming from himself would Lord Wicklow abandon the view he had already expressed. Still, anxious to "do the right thing," he made Mrs. Howard a certain offer. She refused it. In March, 1869, however, when he was dead, she aired her grievances afresh in the correspondence columns of the *Times* :

"I am the widow of William George Howard, married to him at Kensington in February 1863. My infant son, born in May 1864, is now Lord Wicklow. My husband died the following October.

“Immediately on his death, most of the newspapers published letters and comments more or less untrue. The editors of the *Peerages* followed suit, and refused to correct their error without the authority of the late Earl, who was a total stranger to my late husband and myself.

“With respect to the estates, and in justice to his creditors, I beg to observe that my husband was tenant-in-tail in remainder ; and was at the time of his death preparing to set aside a most unjust resettlement of the estate forced upon him. His will, made for the purpose, will I hope, enable me to establish my absolute claim on the property, and satisfy all just claims due by him.”

This remarkable communication attracted a prompt response from a Dublin solicitor, Mr. Octavius O’Brien :

“Referring to the letter, signed ‘Ellen Howard,’ which appeared in the *Times* of the 25th inst., I beg, on the part of my client, Charles, Earl of Wicklow, to deny that the alleged infant is now the Earl.

“It is not my intention to notice the other mis-statements in that letter ; but I think it is due to the memory of the late Earl to say that his Lordship, as protector of the title and estates, with an anxious desire to ascertain the *status* of the alleged child, did all he could to induce this lady to satisfy him of what she now publicly states, and, finally, he invited her to proceed in the Court of Probate to prove the legitimacy. He offered to pay all the expenses, irrespective of the result, and, further, should a decree of legitimacy be made, his Lordship undertook to contribute to the proper maintenance and education of the alleged child.

“This and all information, was refused by the lady. His Lordship sought through every other means to learn the particulars, when, being perfectly satisfied of the facts, he came to the conclusion, and solemnly declared, that Charles, the present Earl, was his heir and successor, which we are prepared to prove.”

Mrs. Howard picked up the glove, and wrote another letter to the *Times* :

“The *Times* of this day published a letter, signed ‘Octavius O’Brien,’ which contains a modicum of truth, but misrepresents my acts and motives.

“Immediately on the death of my husband, I was subjected to every annoyance which well-paid detectives dared to inflict on me. During this infliction I received, in August 1864, a discourteous letter from Lord Wicklow, somewhat to the purport indicated in the letter signed ‘O’Brien.’ I subsequently called on Lord Wicklow, as did two friends of my deceased husband, to point out to him how unreasonable was the request made by him. He would see none of us. I was asked to cast doubts on my child and myself by appealing to the Court of Probate, to prove the legitimacy which no one had a right to challenge, and which to me and others was self-evident. Besides, the proof, until the death of the late Earl, was legally useless.

“Had Lord Wicklow chosen to call on me, I should have been delighted to receive him. But he did not call ; and I cannot comprehend why he did not call, and why he so determinedly avoided hearing from my own lips that which it now appears by Mr O’Brien’s letter he was so anxious to know.”

Undisturbed by all this, or else thinking that Mrs. Howard would not proceed to extremities, on May 10, 1869, Charles Howard petitioned the House of Lords for leave to vote as Earl of Wicklow at the election of representative peers in Ireland. Following the customary practice, the matter was referred to the Committee for Privileges. But, before this body could meet, a second petition was presented by Mrs. Howard, claiming the peerage on behalf of a boy of five, who, she said, was her son ; and this counter-petition was also referred to the Committee.

In order to unravel the distinctly tangled skein with which the Committee for Privileges were now confronted, it is necessary to go back to the time when Mrs. Howard first appeared on the scene.

In the spring of 1861 a Miss Ellen Richardson, the daughter of a coachman, happened to be staying with her aunt at Slough. This aunt, Mrs. Pitt, whose origin was similarly humble, was the wife of a Colonel Horace Pitt, who afterwards became Lord Rivers. On the death of her husband, Ellen Richardson's widowed mother remarried, her second choice being the Rev. John Butterfield, rector of Longney, a parish in Gloucestershire. It was while she was visiting her aunt that Miss Richardson met William Howard, the nephew and heir-presumptive of the Earl of Wicklow. A circumstance that was afterwards to become significant was that she was introduced to him by a Mr. Peter de Bordenave, an individual with whom both she and her sister had long been carrying on an intrigue.

Although William Howard was a notorious libertine, a heavy drinker, and a bankrupt hiding from his creditors, these little failings were ignored ; and when he proposed marriage, his offer was accepted. But, as Miss Richardson began by exhibiting a maidenly bashfulness, and would not give him an immediate answer, he wrote to her mother on the subject :

“ DEAR MRS. BUTTERFIELD,

“ Bordenave has shown me your kind letter. For the sentiments it contains I return you my sincere thanks. My difficulties are only temporary. This is certain, that, on Lord Wicklow's death, my wife's jointure of £1000 a year is secured before all other claims.

“ When Parliament meets at the end of the month, my uncle, the Primate of Ireland, will come to town ; and I will ask him to marry us if you should succeed in your kind intentions and be able to persuade your daughter to accept me. Pray, then, persevere in my behalf. I can only assure you of my most sincere love and affection for her ; and, if fate should grant me such a boon as to obtain her for my wife, I will endeavour to make her happy and prove a good husband to her.

“ Hoping that I may see you in London soon, with kindest regards to you and your daughter.

Ever I remain,

W. G. HOWARD.”

This letter, or perhaps the glamour of the writer's blue-blooded connections, removed all difficulties ; and in the spring of 1863, William Howard and Ellen Richardson were married. The only disappointment to Mrs. Butterfield's maternal heart was that the ceremony was not, as she had hoped, performed by the bridegroom's uncle, the Primate of Ireland, but by a humble curate. Still, one cannot have everything ; and she at any rate had secured an earl's nephew and heir for her son-in-law.

If Mr. Howard had no ready cash, he had something just as good, i.e. credit. This enabled him to stop with his bride for several weeks at the Burlington Hotel. When the manager was callous enough to demand a settlement, they transferred themselves to a less aristocratic quarter, and lodged with a Mr. and Mrs. Bloor, in Burton Street, Pimlico. There they had for a fellow lodger Mrs. Howard's old friend, Mr. de Bordenave.

From Burton Street, where they lived for some months, the couple went to Ireland. On their return Mr. Howard, finding his creditors troublesome, hurried back to Dublin by himself. During his absence, de

Bordenave undertook to "look after" his wife. He appears to have interpreted this duty in liberal fashion, for he travelled with her to Chester and elsewhere; and in London he found rooms for her until the departure of a tenant enabled her to go back to her old lodgings at the Bloors'.

Being kept short of cash, Mrs. Howard endeavoured to get employment as a governess. Possibly, domestic worries—for her husband was said to be "drinking himself to death" in Dublin—disturbed her memory. At any rate, she filled up her application as "Miss Ellen Howard, daughter of a distinguished clergyman." But, since she was not successful in securing a post, this was no great matter.

According to Mrs. Howard's account of the happenings of the next few months, her husband, becoming suddenly uxorious, returned from Dublin during the winter of 1863, and had several meetings with her. But, as the bailiffs were looking for him, these visits occurred under cover of darkness and in rooms that belonged to de Bordenave. Still, whether clandestine, or not, the interviews would appear to have had the result that might have been expected of them. At any rate, in the following spring, Mr. Bloor, in response to a request from Mr. Howard, who said "he had something important to tell him," went to Ireland. What his former lodger had to tell him was that his wife was expecting a "happy event." Mr. Bloor, full of sympathetic interest, readily agreed that this should take place in his own house.

Languishing, perhaps, for her husband's society, and continuing to hear unpleasant stories of his conduct in Dublin, Mrs. Howard said she would bring him back to London. On a May afternoon she packed a box and

started off in a cab for Euston. But she returned very suddenly; and Mr. Bloor, asking an inconvenient question, was told that the new arrival might put in an appearance at any moment. Accordingly, he hurried off to fetch a doctor. But the doctor not being at home, he came back without him. He was then greeted by Mrs. Bloor with a fresh piece of news. This was that, during his short absence, Mrs. Howard had given birth to a son; and that, all having gone well, the services of the medical man would not be required.

This, then, was the child for whom Mrs. Howard, as his mother and guardian, was claiming the Earldom of Wicklow, with the coronet and family rent-roll of £15,000 a year.

Sergeant Ballantine, who was in most of the *causes célèbres* of his era, was in the preliminary stages of this one. But he retired from it before it had gone very far. He was a "man of the world," and, although not unduly censorious, he felt that Mrs. Howard's story lacked "body." His opinion, too, of her late husband was unflattering. "From a very early period," he wrote, "Mr. Howard entered into every description of profligacy, was rarely sober, and became nearly imbecile."

Before he relinquished his brief, Sergeant Ballantine drew up particulars of the petition to be presented by Mrs. Howard. The chief points were as follows :

"The child was born on May 16, 1864, at No. 27 Burton Street. Mr. W. G. Howard, the father, was not at the time residing in Burton Street. He was in embarrassed circumstances and had gone to Ireland. Between his wife and himself there existed cordiality and affection.

"There are certain circumstances which have, perhaps, operated to bring into doubt the reality of



SERGEANT BALLANTINE

this birth of a child. In the first place, it occurred without the presence of a medical man. It was a premature birth, brought on by the anxiety and trouble in which Mrs. Howard found herself. She had been for some time deprived of the society of her husband, through his fear of being taken upon judgments which had been obtained against him ; and he stayed away on that account from his wife, and often only saw her by stealth in the evening ; and sometimes not at the house where she was known to live, but at another house in the same street, which he could enter without being suspected, and which the kindness of a neighbour placed at his disposal.

“ Mr. W. G. Howard was an extravagant and careless man ; he had fallen into embarrassment of a very pressing kind ; he had executed a resettlement of the entailed estates on conditions very onerous to himself. He had become dissatisfied with what he had thus done, and he believed that he could set aside these deeds. The birth of a son would, as he thought, have affected his measures taken for this purpose ; and that was one reason why he was desirous to keep the birth a secret till he could be in a situation to enforce his claims against those persons whom he believed to have taken unfair advantage of his necessities.”

It may, of course, have been an oversight, but the learned Sergeant omitted to give any definite particulars of these “ claims.” The result was, the counsel who followed him had to work in the dark.

3

The first meeting of the Committee for Privileges was held on June 21, 1869, with Lord Redesdale in the Chair. Among the other members present were the

Lord Chancellor (Lord Hatherley), the Marquess of Abercorn, the Earl of Winchelsea, Viscount Leinster, and Lord Chelmsford; and they were afterwards assisted in their deliberations by the Bishops of Lichfield, Oxford, and Peterborough. Sir Roundell Palmer, with whom was Sir John Karslake, opened the proceedings by telling the Committee that, since his client, Charles Francis Howard, had become Earl of Wicklow, the peerage had also been claimed for a child alleged to be a son of his deceased elder brother, William George Howard. "The mother," he said, "does not tell your lordships by what name this child was baptized, but he calls himself the Earl of Wicklow, and asks, apparently, to be permitted to oppose the present petition."

Evidence to prove the marriage of William Howard and Ellen Richardson was given by the clergyman who had performed the ceremony. Lord Wicklow's solicitor, Mr. O'Brien, said that, after her husband's death, he had employed private detectives to watch Mrs. Howard. Thereupon, Mr. de Bordenave, who was attending as a member of the public, roused their lordships from their accustomed calm by demanding permission to cross-examine this witness.

"Pray, who are you?" enquired the Chairman.

"I am a foreigner, and a friend of Mrs. Howard. She has authorised me to appear for her, and I am thoroughly familiar with all the circumstances of the case."

"Really, it is quite new to me," returned Lord Chelmsford, looking very shocked, "that an individual who does not belong to the legal profession should examine a witness."

As the Lord Chancellor, when appealed to, was of the same opinion, the applicant was told that any questions

he had to put must come from Mrs. Howard's counsel. But the difficulty was that Mrs. Howard had no counsel. As she declared she was not in a position to employ any, the Committee instructed a barrister, Mr. Clark, to represent her ; and, to afford him time to get up his case, the further hearing was then adjourned.

The first witness to be called when the Committee reassembled was the Archbishop of Armagh, Primate of all Ireland and uncle of the late William Howard. His opinion of his nephew was unflattering. "The less I say of his conduct, the better," he declared. This being the case, he was not asked anything of importance. William Bloor, who followed, had a good deal to say. Mr. Howard, he told the Committee, had frequently visited his wife in Burton Street before she was "brought to bed" there ; and that, on the evening when she was taken ill, he himself had gone to fetch a doctor ; and that, on coming back without one, he heard that the baby had been born.

"Did you believe this ?" he was asked.

"Certainly I did."

"And you actually saw the child ?"

"Yes."

"What was it like ?" enquired the Chairman.

"It looked very red, my Lord."

"Did Mrs. Howard appear fond of the child ?"

"I never saw a more affectionate mother."

But although he himself had seen the infant, the witness could not tell the Committee the name of any doctor or nurse who had done so. His wife and sister, he declared, had given the mother such help as was required. With reference to de Bordenave, he said that this individual had lodged with him at the same time as Mrs. Howard. Beyond this piece of information

he would not go ; and, on being questioned as to the proximity of their respective sleeping apartments, he suddenly grew coy.

" I do not understand why you want to know that," he said.

" It is not necessary that you should understand," returned Sir John Karslake, " but what is necessary is that you should answer my question. Did Mr. de Bordenave visit Mrs. Howard in her room ? "

" Very seldom."

Mrs. Bloor, who followed her spouse, said that she and her sister Rosa had been actually present when the child was born, and furnished obstetrical details. The delivery, she declared, had been quite easy, and no doctor was wanted. She had done all that was necessary for the mother, and " dosed her with calomel and rhubarb pills." Heroic treatment, perhaps, in a midwifery case ; yet it appeared to have proved effective, as Mrs. Howard left her bed the next day.

" I am going to ask you a very rude question," said counsel. " What is your age ? "

" Well, I am past forty," returned Mrs. Bloor.

" And have you ever had any children ? "

" No, I haven't."

" Thank you," said Sir John, who, as was later to become manifest, had not put the question without a very good reason. " Can you tell me," he continued, " of anybody beyond yourself and your husband who actually saw this child while it was under your care ? "

According to Mrs. Bloor, several people had done so ; and, asked who they were, she mentioned a Dr. Wilkin, Mr. and Mrs. Butterfield, Miss Jane Richardson, and the ubiquitous Mr. de Bordenave.

As Dr. Wilkin was dead, he could not be examined.

Still, all the others whose names had been given were available. The first of them, the Rev. Mr. Butterfield, stepfather of Mrs. Howard, said that he had seen the child when it was four years old. But he admitted that he had not heard of its existence until after the death of her husband. Yet, ten days from its birth his step-daughter had stayed with him at Longney. Still, Mrs. Butterfield must have felt suspicious, for she had challenged her on the subject and said, "My dear Ellen, you look as if you had just been confined." The non-committal answer to this was, "Perhaps I have, and perhaps I haven't."

Rosa Day, the sister of Mrs. Bloor, told the Committee that she was actually present when the child was born ; and, with her sister, had looked after it for two years. But, on the instructions of Mr. and Mrs. Howard, the infant's existence had been kept as secret as possible. To secure this, Louisa Jones, the servant girl, never entered the room it occupied, and a similar precaution was observed when strangers visited the Bloors. Still, Mr. de Bordenave knew of the child, "because he was a great friend of the father and mother," as did also another "great friend," Mr. Nassau Clark. When this witness said that de Bordenave was "possibly a Spanish prince," counsel enquired "if he built castles in Spain." Mr. Clark had no knowledge on the subject. Still he had seen him on the previous day at his lodgings in Bloomsbury, and these lodgings, he admitted, were shared by Mrs. Howard.

4

It was not until the fourth hearing that Mrs. Howard herself met the Committee. There had been considerable difficulty in securing her presence, and she had

written to say that, unless she were allotted fresh counsel, she would withdraw from the case. The difficulty was adjusted by the action of Sir John Coleridge, the Solicitor-General, who undertook to accept a brief on her behalf. When she did appear, she detailed the circumstances of her marriage (which, by the way, had never been disputed), and declared that she had given birth to a son. As the Committee expressed a wish to see him for themselves, she retired and brought in a little boy with fair hair and blue eyes, clinging to her skirts.

Their lordships regarded him with curiosity.

"Is this the actual child of which you were delivered, madam?" enquired Sir John Karslake.

"Yes, it is," was the emphatic response.

"What is the child's name?" was the next question.

"He hasn't any name."

"Has he been baptized?"

"No."

"Has he been vaccinated?"

"No."

"Has any doctor ever treated him?"

"No. He has never had any illness."

None the less, a certain Dr. Wilkin was said to have seen the child, when he paid a chance call. He had, declared Mrs. Howard, told her that he would not report the birth "because her husband had promised him £10,000 to keep quiet about it." With these odd views of professional etiquette, it was perhaps as well that Dr. Wilkin was dead and thus could not be called upon to explain them.

The child having been identified by Mr. and Mrs. Bloor as the one born in their house, Sir John Karslake went on to something else. There was a certain individual who had played a very active part all through the

business, and he was anxious to get full particulars of him from Mrs. Howard.

“Who and what is this Mr. de Bordenave, who seems to have been very intimate with your mother and yourself?” he enquired.

“I don’t know why you should put such a question to me,” was the response.

“Never mind about that, madam,” returned Sir John. “Just tell me who he is.”

“Well, he is a foreign gentleman, and of very good family.”

As beyond this Mrs. Howard would not go, the subject had to be dropped. Still, since Mr. de Bordenave evidently knew a good deal about the matter, the Committee said they would like to see him. He, however, had no wish to see them, and did not appear when his name was called. Thereupon, “peremptory instructions” were given for his attendance.

But “peremptory,” or not, they had no effect. As the official who was directed to serve the subpoena said that he was not to be found, an order was made that “Black Rod should attach his body and bring him forthwith to the Bar of the House.” In simple English, what this meant was that a warrant was issued for his arrest. As, however, he had left London, it could not be executed. This was regrettable, since it was clear that his relations with Mrs. Howard were, to put it mildly, equivocal. Thus, Dr. Fuller, a medical witness, said that he had been introduced by him to Mrs. Howard and engaged by him to attend upon her during her confinement when it should occur; and another witness said that she had come with him to look for fresh lodgings.

5

From whatever point of view it was regarded, there were weak spots in Mrs. Howard's story. Many weak spots. For one thing, no doctor had attended her, and the birth had not been registered. Further, babies possessed of ordinary lungs are apt to use them, and to make their presence felt. Yet, people living in the same house had no knowledge of this one. Thus, Louisa Jones, a little drudge employed by the Bloors at eighteen pence a week during the period when the child was alleged to be living with them, had neither seen nor heard the baby ; and the Rev. Mr. Lewis, a curate who was lodging there, had a similar experience. "There was no cry or squall of any description," he declared. Then, Elizabeth Godden, a dressmaker, said that she had measured Mrs. Howard for a costume a few days prior to the alleged birth, and had not noticed that her figure indicated approaching maternity. Important evidence was also given by Dr. Baker Brown. This was to the effect that in July 1864 a lady, calling herself Mrs. Grey, consulted him professionally. She told him that she had never had any children ; and, having examined her, he thought this the case. He had not seen her since, but she bore a very strong resemblance to Mrs. Howard.

An obstetrical discussion as to the possibility of Mrs. Howard having given birth to a child, without the fact becoming apparent to all who saw her, then followed. In parts it became a little heated. The Solicitor-General, who took all knowledge for his province, argued that she could have done so ; and Dr. Brown and a colleague, Dr. Price, who considered such a

happening a reflection on their diagnosis, were positive that she could not.

Having called all his witnesses, and cross-examined those produced by the other side, Sir John Coleridge delivered a long speech on behalf of his client. In the course of this he made somewhat heavy weather. His case was that, all things considered, the balance of probability was in favour of Mrs. Howard. There were, he agreed, "inconsistencies" in her story, but he himself did not think very much of them. The absence of the elusive de Bordenave was regrettable, and contributed colour to the theory that his relations with Mrs. Howard had not been entirely circumspect. He admitted, candidly enough, that they were "obviously tainted with impropriety." Still, his point was that she had done her best to find him and that she should not suffer because she had failed. As for her attitude in concealing the birth of her son, this, he held to be "immaterial," and was adopted at the express wish of her husband. The fact, too, that no doctor had attended her was unimportant, as Mrs. Bloor and another woman had done all that was wanted. The Committee had seen the child ; and if Mrs. Howard were not the mother, nobody could say who was.

"There are," he said, "a number of facts in this business that are strange and inexplicable. Among them is Mrs. Howard's conduct with reference to Lord Wicklow's letters to her. She must have known that this matter would have to be faced ; and I agree that, so far as he was concerned, nothing could have been fairer or more generous than his offer. Why on earth it was refused, I do not know. But it was refused. The result is, your lordships are dealing with a woman who does not act as other women would."

Sir John's final effort was to impress upon the Committee that neither the Bloors nor anybody else who had given evidence on behalf of Mrs. Howard had anything to gain by telling falsehoods. "My Lords," he concluded, "it is to your good sense, to your great experience, and, if I may venture to say so, above all to your desire to do justice that I leave in your hands the case of the infant of Mrs. Howard."

Sir John Karslake, when it came to him to reply, would not have this at all. Mrs. Howard's story was, he said, founded on nothing less than a conspiracy between herself and the much wanted Mr. de Bordenave, with other witnesses as accomplices, to pass off an unknown infant as the nephew of the Earl of Wicklow.

Just before the child's alleged birth, he said, Mrs. Howard was representing herself as a single woman, and, "although in such a condition of pregnancy that her disgrace must have been obvious," was trying to get employment as a governess. Then, too, if the child had been the bona fide issue of her marriage, there would have been no reason for "hushing it up." Yet, she had refused Lord Wicklow's offer to bear the expense of a legitimacy suit, and, if established, to acknowledge the child and pay for his upbringing.

In the course of a long speech, Sir John further declared that Mrs. Howard had never given birth to any child. Apart, he said, from the medical evidence to this effect, there was the fact that her husband, whom he described as "a hopelessly insolvent drunkard," was living in Ireland when his wife said he had paid her clandestine visits in London. Nor was any letter produced from him acknowledging the dignity of fatherhood. As to the mysterious infant she now alleged to be hers, he offered two suggestions. One was that the

real mother was Mrs. Bloor ; and a second was that it was Jane Richardson, the younger sister of Mrs. Howard. In support of this latter contention, he had got Mrs. Butterfield to admit, under pressure, that, although unmarried, her daughter Jane had been delivered of a child, of which de Bordenave was the reputed father.

This slip from the narrow path had greatly shocked the Rev. Mr. Butterfield. His stepdaughter had, he declared in a letter to Mr. O'Brien, "exceeded the utmost limits of feminine propriety. We blush," he continued, "for human nature when we know that such things are even possible. The child of J. R. [Jane Richardson] was baptised about three weeks after its birth. I believe the name of the father, de Bordenave, does not disgrace the register." In a second letter he added, "How grievous for my poor wife to have two daughters in the power of this villain !"

The hearing, which had begun in May, had now lasted until August ; and, although witnesses had been examined and cross-examined, and speeches and counter speeches delivered by the dozen, the solution of the mystery of the parentage of the child put forward as the Earl of Wicklow seemed as far off as ever. The result was, the members of the Committee, who were obviously getting more than a little tired of the whole business (and perhaps sighing for a breath of country air) announced that they would adjourn until the next session.

6

When, in February 1870, the hearing was resumed, Mrs. Howard applied for another adjournment, on the grounds that she had further evidence to submit. Asked what this was, she now declared that Mr. O'Brien,

Lord Wicklow's solicitor, had suborned witnesses to give false testimony ; that she herself had never consulted Dr. Brown and Dr. Price ; and that, when they said they had examined her in London, she was at Longney, in Gloucestershire.

The accusation against Mr. O'Brien was serious, since it really amounted to a charge of professional misconduct. Although this was not sustained, his attitude had certainly been a little odd. Thus, it was proved that he had settled various liabilities incurred by Mrs. Howard to shopkeepers and others whose evidence he wanted ; and he had also written some equivocal letters to her stepfather, some of which could be construed as hinting at the possibility of obtaining preferment for him from Lord Wicklow.

"Did you," demanded the Solicitor-General, "express a hope that his services would be appreciated by a discriminating episcopacy, or tell him you felt he had been unrecognised too long ?"

"Well, I pitied his position."

"And was it in the interests of truth that you settled these bills of his stepdaughter ?"

"It was at the suggestion of Mr. Butterfield that I paid them."

Apparently, Mr. O'Brien had considered the "suggestion" of value, as he had made Mr. Butterfield a present of £50.

To prove that Mrs. Howard was not in London when it was alleged that she had consulted Dr. Brown, a number of tradesmen from Longney were examined by Sir John Coleridge. They were all positive that they had seen Mrs. Howard among them during this period. Written orders they had received from her for the supply of goods were also produced. Among such, were

requests for "three pounds of best rump steak" and a "large leg of mutton," together with fresh eggs and milk and other perishable items. Hence, it was fairly obvious that they must have been consumed on the spot. Still, this did not establish the fact that it was Mrs. Howard who had consumed them.

The case had been full of surprises. But a fresh and still more dramatic one was to hand. On March 1st it was unfolded by Sir Roundell Palmer.

"It now becomes my duty," he said in a solemn voice, "to make to your lordships a statement as to certain material facts which have only just come to our knowledge. It is one which I have been unwilling to make until I was fully satisfied that the evidence to support it was such that the statement should not be withheld any longer."

With this preliminary, counsel proceeded to unfold an astonishing story. It was quite true, he said, that Mrs. Howard was not in London when Dr. Brown was said to have examined her. Still, she was not, as she herself had declared, at Longney, but at Liverpool, where she was visiting the lying-in ward of the workhouse. There she told the head nurse that she wanted to adopt a baby boy with blue eyes and fair hair. She was shown a number of infants, and eventually selected one, of which a single woman, Mary Best, was the mother. Assured by Mrs. Howard that the child "would be brought up as a gentleman, and that the adoption would be to its advantage," Mary Best's maternal instincts were overcome, and she parted with her offspring. This, then, said Sir Roundell Palmer, was the child which was now being put forward as the rightful Earl of Wicklow.

The Solicitor-General, completely taken aback (as

well he might have been) by this shattering disclosure, at once asked for an adjournment, in order to consider the fresh aspect which the position had now assumed. A reasonable application. The Committee were prepared to grant it, but they said that, prior to doing so, they had some questions to put to Mrs. Howard. It was then that another difficulty arose, for, while she was ready enough to submit stacks of documents with which to support her case, Mrs. Howard had no desire to answer questions that might prove awkward. Her objection, indeed, was so strong that, although summoned to attend, she refused to take the Oath and be sworn.

"I will not tell you anything," she declared, "until all the other witnesses have been examined. They charge me with telling lies, and they must prove their case first."

"It is not for you, madam," said the Lord Chancellor, "to dictate to us. We have decided that you are to be cross-examined. You cannot refuse to be sworn."

"But I do refuse. One charge after another has been brought against me."

"Only one charge has been brought against you," interposed the Chairman. "It is that you are not the mother of this child. Now, will you be sworn?"

"No; I will not."

Flat defiance! The assembled peers looked as if they expected the roof to fall in. While they were wondering how to deal with the threatened *impasse*, the Lord Chancellor came to the rescue by dissolving the Committee, as such, and turning its members into a judicial court. He then directed Black Rod to take the recalcitrant lady into custody for "a very gross contempt." But the question as to what was to be done

with her offered a fresh problem, for when she was told that she must apologise and "purge her contempt" by paying a substantial fine, she emphatically declared she would do nothing of the sort. As the simplest way out of the difficulty, Black Rod was then instructed to release her.

Mrs. Howard's example was a bad one. Still, it was not followed, for Mary Best, on being examined, offered the Committee no trouble. She said that, when a servant girl at Liverpool, she had been "intimate" with a man called Jones. The inevitable consequences resulted; and in July 1864 she was compelled to go to the lying-in ward of the workhouse, where she gave birth to a male child. A week later she was visited there by two ladies. One of them, whom she identified as Mrs. Howard, admired her baby and asked her to part with it. She did not want to do so, but Mrs. Higginson, the head nurse, advised her to accept the offer.

The Solicitor-General had some awkward questions to ask this nurse. Among other things, he wanted to know why, if Mary Best's infant had been handed to Mrs. Howard, the discharge book showed that Mary Best had left the institution with her own baby.

"Did you make the entry to this effect," he enquired, "and did you know it to be untrue?"

"Yes, I did. I always put down a pauper child as leaving with the mother when it was taken away by somebody else."

"Why was that?"

"Well, it was the custom. It saved trouble."

As Mrs. Higginson further admitted that she herself had left the workhouse under something of a cloud (caused by the disappearance of a number of bottles of brandy of which she was in charge), her statements

did not altogether impress the Committee. Still, they were supported by two nurses attached to the lying-in ward when this curious and irregular transaction was said to have taken place.

Sir John Coleridge, when it came to his turn to reply, would not accept Sir Roundell Palmer's theory for a moment. His submission was that Mary Best really had parted with her baby. But she had parted with it, he said, to a lady who was going to New Zealand, and this lady was certainly not Mrs. Howard. As the Committee looked a little astonished at this fresh aspect of the business, he added that he had just received a letter from an ex-policeman holiday-making in Boulogne, who could swear that in August 1864 two ladies had, at his suggestion, gone to the Liverpool workhouse, where one of them adopted the child of Mary Best. But they did not take it with them to New Zealand, as it had died before they were ready to start.

"Dublin, London, Liverpool, and now Boulogne. The compass was certainly being boxed. The fact drew an admission from Lord Chelmsford. "In all my experience," he remarked, voicing the feeling of his fellow members, "I have never known a case to break out in so many fresh directions."

Unfortunately for Mrs. Howard, this policeman-witness was not prepared to come to London and be examined. Nor could he furnish the actual names and addresses of the mysterious ladies who had consulted him. Still, Sir John had another card up his sleeve. He could, he said, bring evidence to prove that Mrs. Howard was in Longney when she was supposed to be in Liverpool ; that Mary Best had left the workhouse with her own child ; and that this child had dark hair and dark eyes. His first witness was to be a Mrs. Jones,

of Liverpool, with whose son Mary Best had been on friendly terms, too friendly terms.

"Is it your case," enquired one of the Committee, "that the real father of Mary Best's child was a man in Liverpool called Jones?"

"I cannot say that for certain," was the guarded answer. "There must be several men in Liverpool called Jones."

The evidence of Mrs. Mary Anne Jones was that she had actually seen this child in the workhouse, and that Mary Best had asked her to become its foster-mother. She was sure that it was the same child, and that it had dark hair.

"Do you know anything about young children?" enquired Sir Roundell Palmer.

"I ought to," was the reply. "I've had twelve of my own."

But, when she was re-examined, Mary Best had an entirely fresh story to tell. She did, she now said, leave the workhouse with a child, but it was one that had been given her by another inmate, to gratify her maternal instincts and replace the one she had parted with to Mrs. Howard. "All my friends," she said, "knew that I had had a baby born in the workhouse. That was why I took one away with me." She had told her parents that it was her own; and, when it died shortly afterwards, she had buried it as such. Still, she could not tell Sir John Coleridge the name of the real mother, or that of anybody in the lying-in ward who had witnessed the substitution.

As it was necessary for Mrs. Howard to establish an *alibi*, a number of villagers from Longney, in Gloucestershire, were then examined. They all declared that she was stopping at the vicarage with her relatives when

she was said to have been in Liverpool ; and her mother and stepfather were emphatic that she had not left them during any portion of this visit.

Having called all his witnesses, Sir Roundell Palmer proceeded to sum up the case for his client. He did not think much of the *alibi* offered by Mrs. Howard, to show that she could not have been examined by Dr. Brown in London nor have visited the Liverpool workhouse. But he thought still less of de Bordenave, whom he declared point-blank to be her "evil genius," and "a desperate and unscrupulous character who had got both Mrs. Howard and her sister under his thumb, and plunged them into the lowest depths of degradation." As to Mary Best's story, this he held to be acceptable. If, he said, this woman had not parted with her child, there was no reason for Mrs. Howard to refuse being questioned on the subject. Such refusal was, to say the least of it, suspicious. In conclusion, he submitted that the original claimant, Charles Howard, and not this mysterious infant, was the real Earl of Wicklow.

In his response, the Solicitor-General did what he could to give colour and texture to Mrs. Howard's story. He admitted candidly enough that she had prejudiced her case by "mixing herself up with de Bordenave and refusing to be cross-examined about the Liverpool business." Still, he felt that their lordships "would not let the rights of an innocent child be adversely affected by the misconduct of his mother." It was unreasonable, he said, that Mary Best's offspring should be substituted for the one which the Bloors and other witnesses had seen. There was no evidence, he declared, that Mrs. Howard had gone to Liverpool, and Mrs. Higginson, the workhouse nurse there, was

known to traffic in babies and to make false entries in the official books. But his best point, perhaps, was when he animadverted upon the other side's action in dragging Jane Richardson's slip into the matter. Since her child had been born in 1867, the suggestion that it was really the one being put forward by Mrs. Howard was clearly unwarrantable.

Sir John also had some caustic remarks to offer about a series of letters which Mr. O'Brien had written to the Rev. Mr. Butterfield. These, he declared, "suggested the answers that should be made to certain questions that would be put him at the enquiry"; and he ended up a long speech by urging that the claim which Mrs. Howard had advanced was fully established.

7

The characters had played their appointed rôles; the curtain was falling; and the end of the long-drawn-out drama was near at hand. The end came on March 31, when Lord Hatherley, as their senior, addressed the Committee. He began with a high tribute to Sir John Coleridge, who had, he said, "argued Mrs. Howard's case with a force and intelligence that rarely fell to the lot of any petitioner." Here his compliments stopped. Thus, for all that he was the nephew of an earl, and would, had he lived long enough, have succeeded to the peerage, William Howard was described by him as "a person of disreputable habits, involved in serious pecuniary difficulties." Nor in his opinion was it conceivable that he would have paid his wife a series of nocturnal and clandestine visits when he was suspecting her of misconduct with de Bordenave, and was actually having her watched by private

detectives. As to the elusive de Bordenave, "this was a person who had taken a very prominent part in all directions except one—that of coming forward to give evidence, and had, by absconding, done all that he could to damage the cause of Mrs. Howard."

Continuing his speech, the Lord Chancellor admitted that he was on the whole impressed by the story which Mrs. Bloor and her sister had given respecting the birth of the child of which Mrs. Howard was alleged to be the mother. He even said that "their demeanour would have entitled their evidence to be accepted, had not the circumstances of the case been so prodigiously incredible." That they were this was clear, since the infant in question had been neither registered nor christened nor vaccinated nor helped into the world by any doctor or nurse. He also pointed out that Mrs. Howard, "when far advanced in pregnancy, was representing herself to be unmarried and was applying for a position as governess." Under these circumstances, he felt that the story of the Bloors was a "mere fabrication, deliberately intended to defeat the ends of justice." This couple had, he said, "been guilty of the great crime of conspiring together to foist upon the Wicklow family a child who was not the real heir." Hence, his considered opinion was that the rightful Earl of Wicklow was the original petitioner, Charles Francis Arnold Howard.

As the other members of the Committee took a similar and unanimous view, judgment was delivered that Charles Francis Arnold Howard had fully established his claim to the Earldom of Wicklow and was further entitled to vote as a representative Peer of Ireland. Lord Chelmsford, without actually naming them, also declared that in his opinion "certain of the

witnesses had been guilty of the grave crimes of conspiracy and perjury."

Severe criticism was also forthcoming from the Earl of Winchelsea, who characterised Mrs. Howard's story as "utterly incredible and only fit to furnish the plot of a sensational novel"; and he expressed "heartfelt regret" that the absconding de Bordenave, "the principal mover in this wicked conspiracy for keeping the real heir out of his title," was not brought to justice.

8

In the course of their labours the Committee for Privileges had been required to determine two entirely separate issues. If the infant put before them by Mrs. Howard were the offspring of Mary Best (and, as such, born on the wrong side of the blanket), the claim that he was the Earl of Wicklow, or anybody else, collapsed automatically. But this did not make Mrs. Howard, the mother, or her late husband, William George Howard, the father. Still, the fact that the petitioner was poor and friendless and battling for a helpless child of tender years secured her a good deal of sympathetic consideration from the members of the Committee. She certainly had nothing to complain of in their attitude. They had behaved with the utmost magnanimity, for they had allotted her distinguished counsel and had also given her a grant of £800 from public funds with which to advance her cause. For her failure, Mrs. Howard had only herself to thank. The Solicitor-General had done his best for her, and she had done her worst for herself. If she had offered a shred of acceptable evidence that she had at any time become a mother, she would have had a fair prospect of success.

But all the evidence she had offered had been either negative or unacceptable.

As to the real origin of the child for whom the earldom was claimed, much had been hoped from the evidence of Mary Best. It had been thought that this would have settled the matter definitely. But her contradictions and shufflings and withdrawals had befogged, rather than cleared, the position. Still, Mrs. Howard, by her obstinate refusal to be examined as to whether or not she had bargained for an infant, gained nothing. On the contrary, she merely besmirched her own character, and grievously wronged her dead husband and the child whose interests she professed to have so much at heart.

As Lord Chelmsford had well said, "there never was a case that broke out in so many fresh directions." Much mud had been thrown ; and some of it had stuck. If, too, an attempt had been made by the one side to attach a stigma of illegitimacy to a child born in lawful wedlock, a second had been made by the other one to palm off a pauper infant as heir to the Earldom of Wicklow. Altogether, and throughout its long and patient investigation, the case had been full of mystery and suggestion and concealment from start to finish. But although it was settled by this decision of the highest judicial authority in the kingdom, and Mrs. Howard's story was shown to have been concocted for her own purposes, one point was not settled. It has never yet been settled ; and it never will be settled : What was the real parentage of the little boy with blue eyes and fair hair put forward by Mrs. Howard as the rightful Earl of Wicklow ?

SIR WILLIAM AND LADY WILDE

Sir William and Lady Wilde

I

IN December 1864 a Dublin newspaper wound up a leading article in this fashion :

“ Perhaps the most astonishing *cause célèbre* ever to be heard in a court of justice, or to agitate the citizens of this metropolis, is the one that has just closed here with a verdict of a farthing damages for the plaintiff. Thus ends a suit which shook all Dublin society like a thunderclap.”

The “ thunderclap ” reverberated loud and long. For the moment it even interested the public more than the Yelverton marriage tangle which had only just come to an end. But, considering the issues involved, and the position of the parties concerned, nothing else could well have been expected.

The case was an action for libel brought by a Miss Mary Josephine Travers, the daughter of a Dublin medical man, against Lady Wilde and her husband, Sir William Wilde.

A few preliminary words about the three protagonists are necessary for an understanding of what was alleged to have happened.

Born in 1826, Jane Francisca Elgee, who was afterwards to become Lady Wilde, belonged to a family that had long settled in County Wexford, and was a granddaughter of Archdeacon Elgee, a niece of Sir Charles Ormsby, M.P., and a cousin of Sir Robert McClure. Of a studious disposition from her earliest years, she acquired a sound knowledge of French, German, and Italian literature ; and she would also read Æschylus for pleasure when her contemporaries were reading novels. As a mere girl, a consuming patriotism burned within her ; and, as “ the Madame

Roland of the Irish Gironde," she became obsessed with the idea that the manifold wrongs of her country were directly attributable to its misgovernment by England. That being a period when women were denied the platform, she adopted another medium ; and, during the troublous years of 1847 and 1848, she expounded her political faith in a series of poems. A passage from one of them, "To Ireland," is characteristic :

For I can breathe no trumpet-call,
To make the slumb'ring Soul arise ;
I only lift the funeral-pall
That so God's light might touch thine eyes,
And ring the silver prayer-bell clear
To rouse thee from thy trance of fear ;
Yet, if thy mighty heart has stirred
Even with one pulse-throb at my word,
Then not in vain my woman's hand
Has struck thy gold harp while I stand
Waiting thy rise,
Loved Ireland !

That the young poetess cherished high ambitions is evident from another threnody :

Oh ! that I stood upon some lofty tower,
Before the gathered people face to face
That, like God's thunder, might my words of power
Roll down the cry of freedom to its base !
Oh ! that my voice, a storm above all storms,
Could cleave earth, air, and ocean, rend the sky
With the fierce earthquake shout, "to arms ! to arms !"
For truth, fame, freedom, vengeance, victory !

There was also a tribute to the memory of a couple of youthful patriots who had been condemned as "rebels." A portion of this ran :

A hymn of joy is rising from creation
Bright the azure of the glorious summer sky ;
But human hearts weep sore in lamentation,
For the Brothers are led forth to die !



LADY WILDE

Defendant in *Travers v. Wilde*.

(From a sketch by Harry Furniss. Reproduced by permission of Mrs. Furniss.)

Aye, guard them with your cannon and your lances—
 For those noble two are dying for their sake.
 Yet none spring forth their bonds to sever ;
 Ah ! methinks, had I been there,
 I'd have dared a thousand deaths ere ever
 The sword should touch their hair !

Although she would not, perhaps, have gone quite so far as this, Jane Francisca Elgee would certainly have gone some distance to further any cause she had at heart.

It was in the columns of the *Nation*, a weekly journal of ultramontane and republican views (expressly founded to "create and foster public opinion in Ireland, and to make it racy of the soil"), that her early poems appeared. As they were signed "Speranza," the editor, Charles Gavan Duffy, was ignorant of their real authorship. The fact that he gave them ready hospitality encouraged his young contributor to further efforts ; and, under a second (but masculine) *nom de guerre*, "John Fenshaw Ellis," she next concerned herself with a series of political articles. Gavan Duffy, in his *Four Years of Irish History*, relates how he first made her acquaintance :

"Another poetess came in a widely different guise. Her virile and sonorous songs broke on the public ear like the plash in later times of a great wave of thought in one of Swinburne's metres. She began, however, by prose, and turned the tables on the masculine mimics of woman by writing as a man. I was greatly struck by the first contribution, and requested Mr. John Fenshaw Ellis to call at the *Nation* office. Mr. Ellis pleaded that there were difficulties which rendered this course impracticable, and invited me to visit him in Leeson Street. A smiling parlour-maid, when I enquired for Mr. Ellis,

showed me into a drawing-room, where I found only Mr. George Smith, publisher to the University. 'What!' I cried. 'My loyal friend, are you the new volcano of sedition?' Mr. Smith only answered by vanishing into a back drawing-room, and returning with a tall girl on his arm, whose stately carriage and figure, flashing brown eyes and features cast in an heroic mould, seemed fit for the genius of poetry, or the spirit of revolution. He presented me to Miss Jane Francisca Elgee, in lieu of Mr. John Fenshaw Ellis. . . . Her little scented notes, sealed with wax of a delicate hue and dainty device, represented a substantial force in Irish politics, the vehement will of a woman of genius."

In her political work the new recruit adopted such an inflammatory style that Lord Clarendon, fearful of the consequences, ordered the *Nation* to be suppressed and the editor to be indicted for sedition. As the Attorney-General was haranguing the jury and demanding a verdict, a woman's voice suddenly interrupted him. "I am the culprit," she announced. "It was I who wrote the offending article." The woman was Jan Francisca Elgee. A gallant gesture; and one that had its effect, for, much to the chagrin of the Crown, the jury refused to convict.

"Miss Elgee," says Gavan Duffy, "promised a leading article suitable to the occasion, and provided one which might be issued from the headquarters of the national army." Headed *Facta alea est*, it appeared in the *Nation* of July 29, 1848. "It was," declared the enraptured editor, "as lofty and passionate as one of Napoleon's bulletins after a great victory." Whether this, or not, it certainly upset Lord Clarendon, for it breathed a spirit of revolution in every line, with a clarion call upon Irishmen to divest themselves of the

Sassenach yoke. Among typical passages were the following :

" We must be free ! In the name of your trampled, insulted, degraded country ; in the name of all heroic virtues, of all that makes life illustrious or death divine ; in the name of your starved, your exiled, your dead ; by your martyrs in prison cells and felon chains ; in the name of God and man ; by the listening earth and the watching Heaven, lift up your right hand to heaven and swear by your undying soul, by your hopes of immortality, never to lay down your arms, never to cease hostilities, till you regenerate and save this fallen land !

" Oh ! for a hundred thousand muskets glittering brightly in the light of heaven, and the monumental barricades stretching across each of our noble streets made desolate by England—circling round that doomed Castle, made desolate by England, where the foreign tyrant has held his council of treason and iniquity against our people and our country for seven hundred years.

" . . . We appeal to the whole Irish Nation. Is there any man among us who wishes to take one further step on the base path of sufferance and slavery ? Is there one man that thinks Ireland has not been sufficiently insulted, that Ireland has not been sufficiently degraded in her honour and her rights, to justify her now in fiercely turning upon her oppressor ?

" . . . One bold, one decisive move. One instant to take breath, and then a rising ; a rush, a charge from north, south, east, and west upon the English garrison, and *the land is ours*. Do your eyes flash, do your hearts throb at the prospect of having a *country* ? For you have had no country. You have never felt the pride, the dignity, the majesty of independence. You could never lift up your head to heaven and glory in the name of Irishmen, for all Europe read the brand of *slave* upon your brow.

" . . . To die for Ireland ! Yes ; have we not sworn it in a thousand passionate words by our poets and orators—in the grave resolves of councils, leagues, and confederations. Now is the moment to test whether you value most freedom or life. Now is the moment to strike ; and by striking save, and the day after the victory it will be time enough to count your dead.

" . . . We must show to the world that we are fitted to govern ourselves ; that we are, indeed, worthy to be a free nation ; that the words union, liberty, country, have as sacred a meaning in our hearts and actions as they are holy on our lips ; that patriotism means not merely the wild irresistible force that crushed tyranny, but reconstruction, regeneration, heroism, sacrifice, sublimity ; that we have not alone to break the fetters of Ireland, but to raise her to a glorious elevation—defend her, liberate her, ennoble her, sanctify her."

As there was a good deal more of this—two columns more—the Castle authorities felt nervous, not knowing what "John Fenshaw Ellis" would be saying, or writing, next. "This must be stopped," they declared. Hence, the decision to suppress the paper and put the editor in the dock.

But, although it suppressed the *Nation*, officialdom could not suppress Gavan Duffy's now famous contributor. The attempt to do so merely fired her to fresh efforts. She soon found other channels by which to reach the public ; and brought out a long series of volumes of fiction, memoirs, drama, and biography, together with translations of French, German, and Italian works. Like her poetry, however, her prose was undistinguished, being turgid and involved and diffuse.

In 1851 Jane Francisca Elgee married William

Robert Wilde, a young medical man, and himself the son of a doctor. After studying in London, Berlin, and Vienna, he settled down in Dublin, where, specialising in diseases of the eye and ear, he rapidly built up a big practice ; and, when still under forty, was appointed Surgeon-Oculist-in-Ordinary to the Queen in Ireland.

There were three children of this marriage, two sons, and a daughter who died young. The elder son was William, and the younger, Oscar, was born in 1854. Hence, they were both small boys still in the nursery when their parents sprang into the limelight of the Dublin law courts.

In addition to his medical practice, Sir William Wilde (as he was soon to become) cultivated a taste for literature and wrote a number of books. Prominent among these was a memoir of Dean Swift, to be followed by several volumes of travel, archæology, antiquities, and natural history. He was, however, perhaps best known for the compilation of a "scholarly catalogue of the contents of the Royal Irish Academy, of which learned society he was elected president." In the preface to a memoir of Beranger, of which the first part had been completed by him, Lady Wilde offers a glowing tribute to his talents as an author, which she freely acknowledged were much superior to her own :

"There was," she says, "probably no man of his generation more versed in our national literature, in all that concerned the land and the people, the arts, architecture, topography, statistics, and even the legends of the country ; but, above all, in his favourite department, the descriptive illustration of Ireland, past and present, in historic and prehistoric times, he has justly gained a wide reputation as one of the most learned and accurate, and at the same time one of the most popular writers of the age on

Irish subjects. . . . But it was not alone in the department of national antiquities that Sir William's mental energy was exerted. Whatever his hand found to do, he did it with all his might ; and this energy, that nothing could weary or exhaust, was the secret of his success in all he undertook."

The Compendium of Irish Biography is no less emphatic :

"In everything connected with Ireland's ancient history, traditions, literature, and relics," declares this authority, "he was inspired with an impassioned fervour."

Between practice and precept there is apt to be a difference ; and, zealous patriot as she was, and much as she detested England, Lady Wilde was fond of attending the Castle drawing-rooms and Viceregal receptions. Nobody, too, was more pleased than herself at the knighthood bestowed in 1864 upon her husband. Nor, in after years, did she have any scruples about accepting a pension from the Civil list.

Fond as she was of it, poetry did not occupy "Speranza" to the exclusion of more mundane matters. She took a feminine interest in clothes.

"I should like to reform women's garments," she once declared. "The literary dress should be free, untrammelled and unswathed, as simple and as easily adjusted as Greek drapery, and fastened only with a girdle or brooch. No stiff corselet should depress the full impulses of a passionate heart ; there should be no false coils or frizzy fringe on the brow, to heat the temples and mar the cool logic of thought ; and the fewer frills, cuffs, cascades of lace, the better, for in moments of divine frenzy or feverish excitement the authoress is prone to overturn her ink-bottle. No inspiration could have come to Pythia had she worn a corselet or hoop. . . . As the

symbol of her higher self, unchanged by frivolous mutilations of fashion, dress then attains a moral significance and becomes the exoteric expression of the spiritual nature."

Although she preached these sound views, their advocate does not appear to have practised them very assiduously. A curious description of her, when she was living in Dublin, is given by Henrietta Corkran in a volume of reminiscences :

"A very tall woman—she looked over six feet high—wearing a long crimson silk gown which swept the floor. Her skirt was voluminous. Underneath there must have been two crinolines, for, when she walked, there was a peculiar swaying, swelling movement, like that of a vessel at sea, the sails filled with wind. Over the crimson were flounces of Limerick lace ; and round what had once been a waist an Oriental scarf, embroidered with gold, was twisted. Her long, massive, handsome face was plastered with white powder ; over her blue-black glossy hair was a gilt crown of laurels. Her throat was bare ; so were her arms, but they were covered with quaint jewellery. On her broad chest were fastened a series of large miniature brooches, evidently family portraits, which came down almost as low as the gastronomical region. . . . Lady Wilde reminded me of a tragedy queen at a suburban theatre."

A second woman visitor, Madame de Brémont, has left a more sympathetic portrait :

"What mattered the old-fashioned purple brocade gown, the towering head-dress of velvet, the long gold ear-rings, or the yellow lace fichu crossed on her breast and fastened with innumerable and enormous brooches—the huge bracelets of turquoise and gold, the rings on every finger ? Her faded splendour was more striking than the most fashionable attire, for

she wore that ancient finery with a grace and dignity that robbed it of its grotesqueness. . . . Never before nor since, have I met a woman who was so absolutely sure of herself and of what she was."

Mary Josephine Travers, the plaintiff in the action which was to set all Dublin by the ears, was a young woman of thirty. Her father, Dr. Robert Travers, was the son of a man who had been private physician to the Prince Consort, and was himself a professor of medical jurisprudence at Trinity College. He was also the author of a number of textbooks, and held a responsible position in Marsh's Library. But, together with his reputation for scholarship, he was said to be eccentric ; and, although he had a house at Blackrock, to have a habit of living in the clouds, an address to which, he was to discover, serious drawbacks attached.

2

The stage was set in the Court of Common Pleas, Dublin, on December 12, 1864. There the action was heard by Chief Justice Monaghan and a special jury, who were asked to award Miss Travers £2000 damages in respect of a letter written to her father by Lady Wilde.

This letter ran as follows :

TOWER, BRAY,

TO DR. TRAVERS : *May 6.*

" SIR,

" You may not be aware of the disreputable conduct of your daughter at Bray, where she consorts with all the low newspaper boys in the place, employing them to disseminate offensive placards in which my name is given, and also tracts in which she makes it appear that she has an intrigue with Sir William Wilde.

If she chooses to disgrace herself, that is not my affair ; but as her object in insulting me is the hope of extorting money, for which she has several times applied to Sir William Wilde—with threats of more annoyance if not given—I think it right to inform you that no threat or additional insult shall ever extort money for her from our hands. The wages of disgrace she has so basely toiled for and demanded shall never be given to her.

JANE F. WILDE."

Not a pleasant communication for a father to receive. Dr. Travers, however, appeared to think so little of it that he merely put it in his desk and said nothing about it. From that receptacle it was removed by his daughter. She obviously attached considerable importance to it, for she took it to her solicitors, and instructed them to bring an action for libel, and claim £2000 damages.

The defence was fourfold : (1) that the letter was not libellous ; (2) that the letter was not defamatory ; (3) that there had been no publication ; and (4) that the letter was privileged. As to the plea of privilege, this was founded on the following circumstances :

Miss Travers, said Lady Wilde, having formed an impression that she had been slighted by her, had embarked upon a deliberate campaign of insult and abuse. In the course of this she published a " scandalous and immodest pamphlet," *Florence Boyle Price ; or a Warning, by Speranza*, in which a character, obviously intended for Sir William Wilde, was held up to obloquy and charged with having made an attempt upon her virtue ; and she had also endeavoured to extort money from him. As to the alleged publication, it was argued that none was proved, since the letter complained of had been sent to Dr. Travers and addressed to him personally ; and it was also declared to have been

written without malice and merely to make him to induce his daughter to stop misconducting herself.

Although the action had been brought against Lady Wilde, Sir William Wilde was compelled to figure in it, because, as her husband, he had to accept responsibility for what she did. The position was one of genuine hardship, since his character was besmirched by the plaintiff and he had no opportunity of defending himself. That, however, was the law.

There was a distinguished array of counsel on either side. The cream of the Dublin bar. Thus, Sergeant Armstrong and Isaac Butt, Q.C., led for the plaintiff, and the defendant had the services of Sergeant Sullivan and William Sidney, Q.C.

"The particulars," said Sergeant Armstrong, opening the case for Miss Travers, "are of so painful a description that I sincerely wish the duty of presenting them could devolve upon other counsel." Whether this wish were genuine, or not, the story he proceeded to tell the jury was certainly an astonishing one.

According to this, Miss Travers had, some years earlier, consulted Sir William Wilde for an attack of deafness with which she was then troubled. As his patient was the daughter of a brother physician, Sir William had not charged any fee. His treatment, too, proved effective, and Miss Travers' hearing was restored. But this happy result did not bring their acquaintance to an end; and, when his professional services were no longer required, Dr. Wilde offered others of a non-professional description. Miss Travers, for her part, was ready enough to accept them. Thus, she borrowed books from him, and she also borrowed money from him. Still, she was careful to repay the latter, just as she returned the former.

The next thing that happened was that Sir William introduced Miss Travers into his home circle, where, so counsel declared, "she became the repeated, solicited, and honoured guest at numerous receptions and soirées." This condition of affairs lasted for some years. It was brought to an end by Lady Wilde, who apparently felt that her husband was seeing rather more of his ex-patient—and not always in his consulting-room—than was politic for a medical man. Tongues were wagging; and Sir William had, she was told, escorted Miss Travers to meetings of the British Association, when that learned body assembled in Dublin. It sounds innocent enough. None the less, Lady Wilde elected to put another construction on such trips. Nor did she approve of her husband's habit of corresponding with Miss Travers and addressing her as "Dear Mary." Still, his letters, as a whole, were not very effusive. Thus, he began nearly all of them, "My dear Friend," and signed himself "Yours faithfully." Nor did he say in them much beyond making appointments to take Miss Travers to the Dublin Exhibition and to lectures at Trinity College, and suggesting what books she should read.

When counsel declared that "these intimacies were to mask a guilty purpose," Sergeant Sullivan made a vigorous protest.

"Really, my lord," he complained, "my learned friend appears to forget what this action is. He is making it a vehicle for introducing damaging statements against Sir William Wilde. Yet he must be well aware that Sir William cannot defend himself, since he is only here as the husband of a lady who has written a certain letter. I trust he will not persist in the course he is adopting."

"How is it possible," enquired Sergeant Armstrong, taking up the challenge, "to show the falsehood of the defence unless I show the truth of the transaction?"

"I don't object to the truth," was the reply. "What I do object to is the introduction of slanderous matter."

"If the truth is to come out," retorted Sergeant Armstrong, "I shall be compelled to put it to Miss Travers that she was violated by Dr. Wilde in his study. Because she will swear that she was, is she to be branded a prostitute? I want the truth to come from other lips than mine."

"Perhaps it will," was the acid response.

"Counsel must really keep cool," said the judge, asserting himself. "They should set an example to the younger members of the Bar."

"As your lordship pleases," returned Sergeant Armstrong. "I have now," he continued, warming to his work, "traced this friendly intimacy down to a point where it begins to assume another and more sinister aspect. I do not wish, by any rhetoric or unconscious overstatement, to aggravate the charge in the smallest degree. You shall, therefore, gentlemen of the jury, hear from the lips of Miss Travers herself what it was that occurred and what she complains of in the conduct of Dr. Wilde. You will see my client in the witness-box, and you will note the care and grief on her countenance. You will there observe a mental capacity and traces of an early beauty which do not render it unnatural that the physician should have exhibited a real and deep and lasting interest in this lady."

Such an opening promised well, and the jury pricked up their ears. But, before actually putting his client into the witness-box, the learned sergeant had other disclosures to make. In the month of February 1862,

he said, Miss Travers called on Sir William at his request. After a few minutes' talk with him on ordinary topics, she was, declared counsel, "amazed and, astonished beyond measure when the trusted physician suddenly clasped her in his arms and refused to release her until she had promised to call him William."

Miss Travers, however, called him something else, and something much less endearing. "Spiteful old lunatic," indeed, was one of her expressions. The result was, Sir William, realising he had gone too far in the attitude that should be observed between doctor and patient, wrote a letter of apology. In fact, he wrote several. "Do forgive me, I am miserable," said one; and in a second he declared, "I am in a melancholy way. I lie in bed thinking about you."

Although the attitude of the physician was, to put it mildly, equivocal, that of Miss Travers was, according to Sergeant Armstrong, beyond criticism. "She expressed herself," he said, "in terms of the strongest indignation." She also sent back the flood of letters with which Sir William had bombarded her, and refused to accept from him a peace-offering in the form of "pretty bonnets and warm underclothing."

But Sir William was not to be put off without a struggle. He continued his letters. "Are we to meet no more?" he said in one of them. "I have bought you a dark grey dress, with brown velvet trimmings"; and "Don't throw over your true friend," said another, "but do come and see me."

Having a forgiving disposition, Miss Travers did go to see him again. It was to tell him that she wanted to go to Australia. Sir William approved the idea, and even advanced the necessary passage money. But Australia was a long way off, and Miss Travers,

exercising her feminine prerogative, only went as far as Liverpool. She then returned to Dublin, where, despite what had happened, she continued to visit Sir William. Still, "although he attempted the most unbecoming liberties, and even found fault with her bonnet," he seems to have kept himself in check.

But the restraint was only temporary.

If Miss Travers were lulled by Sir William's promises of amendment, she was to receive a rude awakening when, in answer to his request, she visited him on a certain day in October 1862. It was this visit that was to be her undoing.

At this point in his address Sergeant Armstrong's feelings were so wrought upon that his voice trembled with emotion, and for some minutes he was unable to continue.

"Gentlemen," he said, when he had recovered himself, "I must leave it to my client to tell you in her own words what followed. Such a task is beyond me. All I can say of the happenings in the consulting-room is something that has been said by the poet :

' She went in a maid,
But out a maid she never departed ! '

That she will swear to you ! "

None the less, the sergeant did give some details. Sir William Wilde had, he said, ignoring professional honour and etiquette, "actually attempted to take advantage of the person of his trusting patient."

"Sensation !" scribbled the reporters in their notebooks.

"When," continued counsel, "Miss Travers recovered consciousness, Sir William said to her, 'Rise I beseech you, both for my preservation and your own

good name. I admit I am a ruffian, but my action was involuntary. I am in your power, and you are in mine. Keep our secret, and all will be well. Remember, if you destroy me, you destroy yourself. Do keep quiet, dear Mary, and I will think what is best to be done. I cannot trust you out of my sight, for fear you should do both of us some irreparable injury.' "

This disclosure shocked Sergeant Armstrong more than anything else. "Gentlemen," he said, turning to the jury, "these are the horrid and awful words in which Sir William Wilde admitted the conduct to which Miss Travers will swear. Imagine the state of that unhappy girl. Injured by one who could not offer her honourable marriage, these frantic appeals only roused her horror."

Sir William, however, repeated his entreaties in his letters. "Be a good girl," he wrote in one of them, "and don't tell anybody what happened on the 14th of October."

It was at this juncture that Miss Travers resolved to carry out her original intention of going to Australia. But, much to Sir William's annoyance, she insisted on seeing his wife first, "to explain matters." The visit was not a success, for Lady Wilde snubbed her badly. Another matter to wound her *amour-propre* was that a photograph of herself which she had sent Sir William was sent back by Lady Wilde, with a brief note :

"Dear Miss Travers, Dr. Wilde returns your photograph. Yours very truly, JANE WILDE."

This upset Miss Travers so much that she took to her bed, and swallowed a dose of laudanum. Still, she was careful not to swallow enough to injure herself.

3

Despite her disconcerting experience at his hands, Miss Travers continued to correspond with Dr. Wilde. After an interval, however, she suggested that their acquaintance should stop. Sir William, being a man of few words, wrote back : " Don't be foolish." Miss Travers, however, was " foolish." She called on the doctor, and accepted fresh loans from him. She also sent him letters. Still, they began, " Dear Sir," and ended, " Yours respectfully."

" Now, gentlemen," said Sergeant Armstrong, " I must tell you of a circumstance that shows the condition to which this unhappy girl was driven. You must, however, acquit her of any moral impropriety."

What counsel had to reveal was that, angered by the attitude of Lady Wilde, Miss Travers resolved to " make her smart." An opportunity soon offered itself. Lady Wilde had recently published an English rendering of Marie Schwab's " philosophic romance," *The First Temptation*. Securing a copy for review, Miss Travers dubbed it a " blasphemous work, treating religious matters with abominable frivolity." Lady Wilde was annoyed ; and, when she called, said " not at home." This rankled. Accordingly, Miss Travers discharged a second shaft and wrote a pamphlet, *Florence Boyle Price : or a Warning, by Speranza*, in which she besmirched the character of Sir William Wilde. Typical passages were read to the jury :

" The publication of the following sketch has been suggested by a painful case that, in the early part of this year, appeared in full detail in the northern journals. . . . Trusting it may be of use to others, I submit it to the public as a fact—and not a fiction.

Such warnings are, thank goodness, out of place in our native city, whose medical men have ever enjoyed a world-wide celebrity, not only for talent and skill, but also for their moral rectitude and philanthropic worth. A physician's office has always been held sacred, and his prerogatives considered unlimited ; and it is sad to think that in this, the 19th century, a lady must not venture into a physician's study without being accompanied by a bodyguard to protect her."

This was followed by a long rigmarole describing how a certain "lonely and unsophisticated" Miss Florence Price had been "taken advantage of" by the family physician, "Dr. Quilp." According to this, the amorous doctor had first drugged his patient and then "effected her ruin." The "ruin," however, was not complete, as the alleged victim "decided to keep the disgusting affair quiet."

The allusions in the pamphlet to Sir William Wilde, who figured there as "Dr. Quilp," were far from complimentary :

"The doctor struck me as having a decidedly animal and sinister expression about his mouth, which was coarse and vulgar in the extreme, while his underlip hung and protruded most unpleasantly. The upper part of his face did not redeem the lower part. His eyes were small, mean and cunning. There was lack of candour in his countenance."

There was also an oblique reference to Lady Wilde :

"I think it was well to observe here that Mrs. Quilp was an odd sort of undomestic woman. She spent the greater portion of her life in bed ; and, except on ceremonious occasions, she was never visible to callers. Whenever she entertained, it was clearly understood by her circle that a card left on

the hall table was all that she required of those who had enjoyed her hospitality."

The soi disant "Florence" of the pamphlet was shown to have received letters identical with those which Sir William Wilde had sent Miss Travers and which Miss Travers had sent Lady Wilde. There was thus no question as to the originals of "Dr. and Mrs. Quilp."

Miss Travers took good care that the pamphlet should be brought to the notice of Sir William Wilde. When he was lecturing to the Young Men's Christian Association she had copies distributed among the audience, and hired newsboys to sell it to the public. She also issued a second pamphlet, *Sir William Wilde and Speranza*, and a broadsheet, headed, "The Gross Misconduct of Sir William Wilde, of Merrion Square, towards a Lady in his own House." That this eclipsed its predecessors in virulence and abuse is clear from a typical extract :

"If Mr. W. R. Wilde, of No. 1 Merrion Square, had not been guilty of gross misconduct to a lady in his own house, why did he not launch proceedings against the person who had dared to tamper with his moral character? Why did he say that a certain lady was such a nuisance to him during his business hours that he was compelled to discontinue her acquaintance, and that she, in a spirit of vindictiveness, had spread false reports about him? . . . This diabolical trick was of a piece with the rest of Mr. W.'s manœuvres. As, however, a lady cannot chastise the canine creature, she has no alternative but to print and publish this contradiction of Mr. W.'s disgusting statement."

In order that it should have full publicity, this broadsheet was hawked among the crowd during one

of Sir William Wilde's lectures at the Metropolitan Hall ; and a copy was even offered to Lady Wilde herself.

Lady Wilde had asserted that these various publications represented an intrigue to exist between her husband and Miss Travers. Sergeant Armstrong held that they did not ; and also that they did not justify the letter which she had written. This, he said, was " wicked, passionate, unfounded, cruel, and malicious," and several other things. Altogether, his opinion of it was unflattering. Still, he candidly acknowledged that his client's action in issuing the pamphlet was an error. " A desire for revenge is," he said, " the melancholy explanation. But great must have been the grievance, terrible the suffering which drove her, contrary to every instinct of feminine delicacy, to adopt such a step. Save for these documents, she is in all respects a guiltless girl. If you give her a verdict, give her such damages as will set her right with the public ; give her such damages as will compensate her in some measure for the lacerated heart she has carried, and assure her father that he was not sheltering in his bosom a daughter who had been guilty of conduct that must bring down his grey hairs in sorrow to the tomb."

The preliminaries thus completed, Sergeant Armstrong, amid a buzz of expectancy, put Miss Travers into the witness-box. There she was taken in hand by Butt, Q.C. He found her quite prepared to support the story which his leader had outlined.

" We have been told," he said, " of the circumstances under which you first met Sir William Wilde. Did they lead to any—er—intimacy between you ? "

" Yes."

This " intimacy," said Miss Travers, took the form

of being sent flowers and books and concert tickets by Sir William. He also, she added, pressed her to borrow small sums of money from him. Thinking that Lady Wilde was jealous of her, she wanted to break off the acquaintance. Thereupon, Sir William protested that there was no jealousy, and got his wife to invite her to dinner. Shortly afterwards, she consulted him with respect to a bruised elbow. It was then that he suggested she should call him William, and declared that, if she refused, he would keep her in his consulting-room until midnight.

“What did you say to that?”

“I said that I thought his behaviour dishonourable, unmanly, and mean,” was the spirited response.

“Did you resume your acquaintance with him?” was the next question.

“I did. In October 1862 I consulted him about a burn.”

Asked what the result of this visit was, Miss Travers repeated the story already given by her counsel. This was to the effect that, during Dr. Wilde’s examination, she suddenly lost consciousness, and did not recover until he flung some water in her face.

“What did he say to you?”

“He said, ‘Rouse yourself, or we shall both be ruined.’”

“Anything else?”

“Yes,” returned Miss Travers, whose memory for events that had happened two years earlier seemed remarkably good, “he called himself a ruffian, and said he wished to God that either the Angel Gabriel or the Devil would not make me so troublesome.”

At this point, Mr. Butt, after a nod from his leader, put the question for which all present in the crowded court had been holding their breath :



SIR WILLIAM WILDE
Husband of "Speranza."

“During the interval of unconsciousness was your person violated ? ”

“Yes.”

This being enough sensation for one day, the Court rose until the following morning.

4

Although Miss Travers protested that she was not “revengeful ” towards Lady Wilde, she admitted that she “felt a pique against her.” This was because one of her letters, complaining of Sir William’s alleged misconduct, had been sent back endorsed, “The enclosed is returned, as Lady Wilde does not take the least interest in the subject.” Thereupon, she had written another letter :

“The communication received from Lady Wilde was not very ladylike, inasmuch as it was uncalled-for. The dubbing of her husband was so recent that her ladyship has not yet had time to study and acquire the manners of a lady.”

Not content with this exhibition of rancour, Miss Travers also wrote to Sir William :

“I have come to the conclusion that both you and Mrs. Wilde are of one mind with regard to me, and that is to see which will insult me most. As to you, you have treated me strictly as I deserved ; but to Mrs. Wilde I owe no money, and therefore am not compelled to gulp down her insults.”

The next step she adopted was to have copies of the “Florence Boyle Price ” pamphlet distributed during a lecture that Sir William was delivering to the members of the Young Men’s Christian Association ; and to follow this up by sending an anonymous letter to a local paper :

“ SIR,

“ May I ask what was the cause of the tumult on Wednesday evening outside the Metropolitan Hall on the occasion of Sir William Wilde’s lecture? A number of boys were selling pamphlets ; and, through curiosity, I purchased one in which the knight’s name figured disgracefully. If untrue, the knight ought to take action and punish the offender. However, I find the pamphlet has been in circulation upwards of six months, and the author has challenged the fullest investigation.

INQUIRER.”

In order to make sure that Lady Wilde should see the pamphlet, Miss Travers had a copy delivered at her house. She also continued to attack the reputation of her husband by various methods. Some of them took the form of publishing doggerel verses. One such specimen ran :

The oculist cured
 I give you my word
 With his own bottle, too, I have dosed him
 I have sent him a drink
 That will cause him to think
 Until his own blushes will roast him !

and a second effort was the following :

The other day with much surprise
 I saw it in the paper
 Great W. W. made a knight
 By touch of Carlisle’s rapier.
 But now a man may win a name
 By bottles of eye-water
 The deaf can hear—the blind can see,
 These are his triumphs great, sir !
 The only wonder really is
 They were discovered so late, sir !

This doggerel was sent to Sir William, accompanied by a slip on which was written "With most affectionate regards. Please show this to her ladyship at dessert."

In the cross-examination that followed, a number of questions were asked about the pamphlet.

"Was there any reason for sending a copy to Lady Wilde?"

"I sent it for a joke."

Sergeant Sullivan, unable to see the point of this particular "joke," went on with his questions.

"You adopted Lady Wilde's pen-name of 'Speranza.' Was that to annoy her?"

"Well, she had no right to the name."

"Did 'Dr. Quilp' in this pamphlet stand for Sir William Wilde, and 'Florence' for yourself?"

"Yes, they did."

"In this pamphlet, which you tell us you sent to Lady Wilde for a 'joke,' you say that her husband had administered chloroform and violated you. Was that description correct?"

"No, that was not how it happened."

"Then you deliberately published a falsehood?"

"I published a story."

"Yet you state definitely in the very first paragraph, 'This pamphlet contains an altered and shortened, but unexaggerated, account of Sir William Wilde's conduct.' What is your explanation?"

Miss Travers had no explanation.

There were several brisk passages between opposing counsel.

"You have said," observed Sergeant Sullivan, "that Sir William Wilde assaulted you in October 1862. Was the assault repeated on any subsequent occasion?"

"Don't answer that question," interrupted Sergeant Armstrong. "I object to it, as wholly illegal."

"This is really a very distressing question," said his lordship. "Still, when witnesses come into court they must leave all such considerations outside. Let this lady tell us exactly what occurred."

"There is no room here for mock modesty," commented Sergeant Sullivan, who seemed to think that his lordship had not said enough.

Thus encouraged, Miss Travers declared that Sir William Wilde had attempted to assault her on several occasions after the first one, or that "there was rudeness and roughness that might have led to it."

"All this is very vague," declared the judge, looking up from his notes.

But Sergeant Sullivan had not yet finished.

"Did you," he demanded, "after what had occurred, get further medical treatment from Sir William?"

"Yes, I employed him to cut a corn that was troubling me."

"And did you continue to borrow money from him?"

"I cannot recollect."

A letter, bearing her signature, and reading, "I want the loan of some cash now," jogged Miss Travers' memory. She then acknowledged that she had asked for £20. "You may bring it or send it by post," she had written. "You will see what will happen if you are not prompt as usual."

Chief Justice Monaghan allowed counsel a good deal of rope. Still, he did endeavour to pull them up occasionally.

"Really," he protested, when Mr. Butt, who followed his leader, was dwelling upon the "shocking disclosures" made by Miss Travers, "this is not

relevant. We are unconcerned with any question of morality. I must ask counsel to keep as cool as possible. I cannot have any bickering among them."

"It is very difficult to keep cool under such circumstances," retorted Sergeant Armstrong.

5

The case for the plaintiff having closed with the reading of various letters, Sergeant Sullivan began his address on behalf of the defendant. In the course of this he pointed out that the libel, if any, had been published by Lady Wilde, and that Sir William, who was merely joined to the action as her husband, had no knowledge of it. According to him, the real and only issue was whether this letter was libellous, or not. Miss Travers had pleaded that it imputed unchastity to her. Counsel contended that it did nothing of the sort. It had been written, he said, by Lady Wilde "after she had received the grossest insults and direct provocation imaginable"; and had been sent by her to Dr. Travers, solely to warn him to look after his daughter. "I regret," he observed, "the language in which learned counsel has alluded to Lady Wilde. This was shocking to hear." He also urged the jury to ignore the attacks on Sir William Wilde's character, as these had nothing to do with the case.

In his references to Miss Travers, Sergeant Sullivan did not mince his words. "This wicked woman," and "this infuriated woman," and "this lying woman" were among his gentlest epithets; and he also questioned her sanity, and declared her pamphlets to be "gross concoctions." Nor did he think overmuch of her counsel. "There have," he said, "been many

startling cases in our courts of justice but never one so startling as this. We have here a picture of feminine excellence and purity portrayed by Sergeant Armstrong. In his enthusiasm for his client he forgot himself. Upon my word, I pity his notion of feminine excellence ! ”

Sergeant Sullivan left three questions to the jury : (1) Was Lady Wilde's letter libellous ; (2) Was the letter true ; and (3) Was it written with a genuine intention of checking misconduct on the part of the plaintiff. That Miss Travers had been “ taken advantage of ” by Sir William Wilde, or by anybody else, was not, he said, an issue.

Lady Wilde then entered the witness-box and was examined by Mr. Sidney. In answer to his questions she said she had known Miss Travers for some years. The acquaintance, however, had been broken off because that individual “ obtruded herself.” After this happened, she received letters from her, bringing charges against Sir William Wilde, and also a copy of the pamphlet and a scurrilous tract. It was then that, without consulting her husband, she wrote to Dr. Travers, complaining of his daughter's conduct. She was closely questioned as to the meaning of the words “ intrigue ” and “ wages of disgrace ” in this letter. Her view was that they meant “ an underhand love affair,” and not necessarily “ improper intercourse.” From this position she refused to budge.

In the course of her examination Lady Wilde was asked point-blank if she felt ill-disposed towards Miss Travers.

“ I am not ill-disposed towards anyone,” she returned, “ but I certainly objected to her conduct.”

“ Why,” demanded Sergeant Armstrong, “ did you not answer Miss Travers when she wrote, telling you of your husband's attempt on her virtue ? ”

"I really took no interest in the matter. I looked upon the whole thing as a fabrication."

Lady Wilde having left the box, her counsel, Mr. Sidney, Q.C., addressed the jury. He spoke at great length, and also with some heat, referring to the plaintiff as "this vindictive woman," and declared that her counsel had "misrepresented matters." In the course of his speech, he quoted Dryden; he quoted Shakespeare; and he quoted the Bible. Lady Wilde, he declared, had been "injured, harassed, and oppressed to an unparalleled extent, and her unhappy husband was accused of having dishonoured her bed."

There were several weak points in the plaintiff's case on which counsel put his finger. One was that she was uncertain of the exact date on which Sir William Wilde had "misconducted himself." Another was that, although there were servants in the adjoining room, she had not called for help; and yet another was that she had not reported the occurrence to her father.

Counsel finished up on a high note:

"Gentlemen," he warned the jury, "should the apple of discord be thrown among you, with the idea of attracting a single wavering voice, you will know how to deal with it. For myself I am confident you will give Lady Wilde a verdict which that oppressed, outraged, and harassed lady demands. Remember, she was compelled to write her letter to protect herself from a depth of infamy unparalleled in the annals of history. This cruel action is brought merely to gratify a spirit of revenge, and to allow the plaintiff to put a climax to her villainy and to crush and destroy a once happy home. I do not believe you will allow this miscarriage of justice; but that, instead, your verdict will be in accordance with the dictates of your consciences and satisfactory to the public."

Mr. Butt, addressing the now somewhat fogged jury on behalf of the plaintiff, would not accept all this. In challenging it, there were moments when his forensic flights were perilously near rhodomontade.

“ May it please your lordship and gentlemen of the jury,” he said. “ The case which the unfortunate lady I represent has entrusted to me is the most painful one with which I have ever been connected. Earnestly and from the depths of my heart, I would to God I could think that none of these episodes had happened, or that they had been allowed to come into court. . . . I am contending with rank and influence, and I can only put before you the cause of a weak and friendless woman, a woman whose appeal is founded on the consciousness of truth and the greatness of her wrongs. If you send her away with a bleeding heart, dishonoured and disgraced, no more terrible wrong could blot the annals of justice. But, whatever your decision, I will hereafter await a verdict at that great tribunal where every motive will be known and where the secrets of all hearts will be revealed.”

Counsel had a theory that the “ awful outrage ” to which his client had been subjected was the result of “ platonic love.” The responsible factor was, he said, Sir William Wilde’s fondness for German literature. His wife, who shared this partiality, had translated one such work, *The First Temptation*, and Miss Travers had rightly reviewed it as “ blasphemous.” To show that her criticism was justifiable, he read long extracts to the jury. They looked impressed. Still, this was in 1864, when the standards were somewhat different from what they are to-day.

Having finished his sermon, counsel proceeded to discuss the matter that was more in hand. He made a strong point of the fact that Sir William Wilde had not

gone into the box, but had endeavoured to have the plaintiff discredited, when he himself refused to have her charges tested. "This," said Mr. Butt, "is not the conduct of a man; and I am sorry to think it the conduct of an Irish gentleman." Nor did he think very much of Lady Wilde's attitude in affecting not to know the meaning of the expression "intrigue" in her letter. "If any member of the jury were also ignorant of it, God help him!" was his comment.

"Every word I say about the conduct of Lady Wilde," he went on, "comes from me with regret. Would to God I could tell you she had maintained the character of her countrywomen and played a noble part. When she admitted just now that she knew Miss Travers had attempted to destroy herself, I hung my head in sorrow. Oh, shame on genius! And, above all, shame on the Irishwoman who wrote that terrible sentence—'the matter is one in which Lady Wilde takes no interest.' Oh! that the record of those terrible words might be obliterated! Would to God some good spirit could carry them away into the realms of immensity, and we could forget they had ever been uttered by Lady Wilde!"

It was in bringing his address to an end, Mr. Butt pulled out the *vox humana* stop to its fullest limits:

"Gentlemen of the jury, I have completed my task. I leave this bleeding and broken-hearted woman in your hands, I ask you to give her a verdict against a man who has stood high in the esteem of his fellow-citizens. There must be no compromise. If my client merits your verdict in her favour, there could be no more terrible miscarriage of justice than to withhold it. If, on the other hand, you should find that she has fabricated her story, God forbid I should then ask such a verdict. Yet, can you condemn her when the man who asks twelve Irish gentlemen to

pledge their oaths that she has sworn the thing that is not himself shrinks from the ordeal of the witness-box? If you accept this poor girl's story to be true, then I demand that the man who has wronged and ruined her shall be made to pay ample compensation."

6

So much oratory had been expended by counsel on both sides that there was not much left for the Chief Justice to say in his summing-up. Still, he managed to occupy a couple of hours over it. He was careful to point out that Sir William Wilde had no responsibility, beyond being the husband of Lady Wilde. The letter she had written was clearly libellous, but what had to be determined was the extent to which it was justifiable. As to Sir William's non-appearance in the witness-box, an attempt had been made to excuse this on the grounds that his evidence would be immaterial. The Chief Justice did not share this opinion. "It is for you, gentlemen of the jury," he said, "to draw your own conclusions from his omission to do what one would have thought would have been an honourable man's first impulse." The learned judge also appeared to think that the course adopted by Miss Travers was remarkable. Thus, although she alleged that Sir William Wilde had outraged her, she continued to visit him, to borrow money from him, and to keep up a correspondence with him. As for the pamphlet she had written, this he declared to be "a most extraordinary production"; and her conduct in distributing it as "a more insulting or heartless proceeding on the part of a woman, or anyone deserving the name of a woman, I cannot imagine."

As the jury were directed that the letter was certainly

a libel, and that it was certainly published, they were only required to answer one question, viz., was it true in substance and in fact? With regard to the matter of damages, should they find for the plaintiff, the judge had a word of warning :

“ I must caution you,” he said, “ that the only reason why this woman should have a single sixpence is because of this letter. Lady Wilde is the principal defendant, but she is not a party to the alleged wrong done by her husband to this girl. In estimating damages, you must remember that, although she is a married woman, Lady Wilde must not be called upon to pay more than if she were single.”

As the jury looked a little astonished at this instruction, his lordship explained the reason. “ Although,” he said, “ I anticipate that this case will be finished during his lifetime, if it should so happen that, between now and the delivery of your verdict, it should be the will of the Almighty to remove Sir William Wilde to another world, then all the damages would have to be met by his widow.”

Thus instructed, the jury retired to consider their verdict. After two hours had elapsed, the usher announced that they wished to consult the judge. Thinking that they wanted a legal point unravelled, his lordship left his private room and returned to the Bench.

“ You wished to have something explained, perhaps,” he observed blandly. “ Tell me what it is, and I will do my best to help you.”

“ Thank you, my lord,” said the foreman. “ We wanted to know if we could have some more coals on the fire.”

“ Let it be done,” said the Lord Chief Justice, with the air of solving a knotty problem.

Warmed to their task, so to speak, by this concession, the jury soon finished their labours.

"We find," announced the foreman, "that the defendant's letter was not true in substance and in fact, and we give the plaintiff one farthing damages."

"Very well, gentlemen," was the laconic response. "You are dismissed."

7

The balance of public feeling was certainly with Lady Wilde. "The jury," said one organ, "have assessed at a proper sum the amount of damage suffered by Miss Travers. Although the offspring of a respectable man, the unhappy girl has, by her low, vulgar, and vindictive attack upon an eminent physician, and his not less eminent spouse, done herself irreparable harm."

Much the same opinion was reflected by the London papers.

"In the verdict," declared a *Morning Post* editorial, "everyone who has taken the trouble of reading the voluminous, and we would also say most irrevelant, evidence given in the trial will heartily concur. . . . Never, perhaps, in the annals of judicial proceedings was evidence admitted which, weighed in the scales of common sense and common decency, was so entirely foreign to the point at issue. Miss Travers, from motives best known to herself, thought proper to subject Sir William and Lady Wilde to an uninterrupted course of persecution, which was simply intolerable, and which we do not think we use too strong an epithet in characterising as demoniacal."

The fact that the case was commented upon at all outside Ireland upset the *Freeman's Journal*. "The English organs," it declared, took it up because they

were "anxious to avoid having attention directed to their own social demoralizations. All we ask," it wound up in a furious leader, "is that our English critics will allow us to settle our own affairs."

Well, nobody could say that this particular "affair" had been settled very satisfactorily. Miss Travers had assessed her chastity as being worth £2000; and a Dublin jury had considered that the correct figure was one farthing. Still, as this award carried costs, and as the case had lasted six days and engaged a dozen counsel, the costs must have been heavy.

Mr. Butt had made a great point of the fact that Sir William Wilde had not gone into the witness-box. His neglect to do so was, he contended, an admission of guilt. It was nothing of the sort. Nor had anything definite been proved against him. Yet his character was blackened and he was held up to obloquy. "It can hardly be to his interest," said Mawworm in a solemn editorial, "to supply the public with another dose of such nauseating scandal." This was unfair, for, if the positions of the parties had been reversed, and Sir William had brought an action against Miss Travers, he would undoubtedly have won it. Also, if criminal, instead of civil, proceedings had been taken, the case would have been dismissed for want of corroborative evidence. Then, as to Lady Wilde's letter, this may have been ill-judged. Still, it was addressed to Dr. Travers. He had shown it to nobody; and it was Miss Travers herself who had made its contents public property.

Harry Furniss, in his *Some Victorian Women*, has an odd reference to two of the principal actors in this drama :

"Lady Wilde was a very tall and stoutish inclined woman, with the appearance and air of a tragedy queen of the Mrs. Crummles type. . . . Her husband resembled a monkey, a miserable looking little creature, apparently unshorn and unkempt. . . . Sir William Wilde was a wicked old man. There was no attempt to dispute the fact that he had many illegitimate children. With all the queer ways of this eccentric couple, it is no wonder that Oscar, their genius of a son, grew into an eccentric unnatural being. It would have been more surprising if he had not done so."

"He was currently reported," once wrote Bernard Shaw to Frank Harris, "to have a family in every farmhouse ; and the wonder was that Lady Wilde didn't mind—evidently a tradition from the Travers case."

Robert Sherard, in his *Life of Oscar Wilde*, says much the same thing :

"Together," he observes, "with a high reputation as a man of science, and as a kind-hearted, genial, and hospitable man, Sir William Wilde had also the evil repute of being a man of strong, unbridled passions, in the gratification of which no sense of social or professional responsibility could restrain him. . . . Sir William Wilde left, besides his legitimate children, a number of natural offspring. His portraits reveal, as few physiognomies do, an extraordinary mixture of intellectuality and animalism, of benevolence and humanity with bestial instinct."

According to Frank Harris, Oscar Wilde, when discussing the case with him many years afterwards, took a different view. He is quoted as having expressed himself in this fashion :

"I have always had the greatest admiration and love for my mother. She was a great woman, Frank, a perfect idealist. My father got into trouble once

in Dublin. Perhaps you have heard about it? . . . She stood up in court and bore witness for him with perfect serenity, with perfect trust, and without a shadow of common womanly jealousy. She could not believe that the man she loved could be unworthy, and her conviction was so complete that it communicated itself to the jury. Her trust was so noble that they became infected by it, and brought him in guiltless. Extraordinary, was it not? She was quite sure, too, of the verdict."

It certainly was "extraordinary." Still, Frank Harris, to whom these confidences are said (by himself) to have been made, cannot be accepted as a reliable authority. There is not a shadow of proof that Oscar Wilde ever said anything of the sort. If by any chance he had done so, his memory must have been failing.

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